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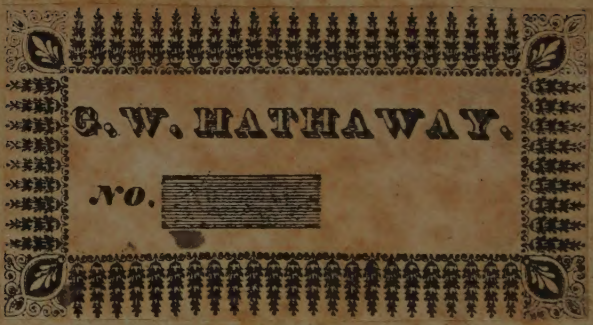

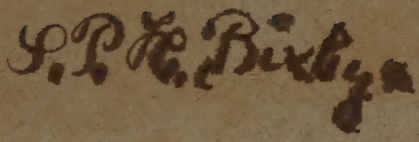

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

By THOMAS WILLIAMS,

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SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.

I TIMOTHY II. 4.

Who will have all men to be saved.

By some persons these words are supposed to prove, that none of mankind will suffer endless punishment. By others, they are brought to oppose important sentiments, which have been believed in every age of the church, by the most eminent saints. The text, then, is

highly interesting. And as it is often perverted, a consistent explanation of it is very desirable. The words of the text may, doubtless, mean that God absolutely intends to save some men of various nations, conditions and characters. And from the context, there is reason to believe, that in this sense the words are used by the apostle. But there is, probably, as much reason to believe that the apostle meant, in the text, to declare what God *desires* respecting the salvation of *every man*. Taken in this sense, the words naturally suggest the following doctrine:

God desires the salvation of every human being.

In the present discourse it is proposed, First, to explain this doctrine; and, then, to prove it.

Let us, in the first place, consider what is meant, when it is said, that God desires the salvation of every human being.

1. It cannot mean that God *designs* that all mankind shall be saved.

All will be saved, if such be his intention. For God declares the end from the beginning,

" Saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." " He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand." It is very evident that the designs of God extend to every thing, and that all his designs will be accomplished. If, then, he intends that every one of mankind shall be saved, there is no reason to believe that any will be lost. But we must believe that many will be lost, unless we disbelieve a great number of the plain and decisive declarations of the holy scriptures. For it is written, " The wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God." And again, " He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."— The Lord Jesus Christ says to sinners, " Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." He said to the unbelieving Jews, " Ye shall die in your sins." And in the commission which he gave his apostles, he says, " He that believeth not shall be damned." It is also written, " The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death." Some, however, pretend that there will, finally, be no persons of such characters as are here described, and threatened with future punishment.

But Christ says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat." Again, when "one said unto him, Lord, are there few, that be saved? He said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." From these declarations of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is evident that many will be excluded from the kingdom of glory. And they, who are excluded, cannot be admitted at any future time. For Christ says to such an one, as shall be cast into hell, "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."—And again he says, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life

maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Of Judas it is said, "It were good for that man, if he had never been born." But if he shall at any future period, however distant, be made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, to have been born will be inconceivably for his benefit. Abraham said to the rich man in torments, "Between us and you there is a great gulph *fixed*: so that they, who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." At the last day, many will be placed on the left hand of the Judge, to whom he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." They, who shall, at the final judgment, be placed with the wicked, will for ever remain of the same character. For it was said unto John, "The time is at hand.—He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still." It is certain, then, that all mankind will not be admitted into heaven at the day of judgment; but that many will then be sentenced to suffer the torments of hell. And it is equally certain that those persons, who shall then be sentenced to suffer the torments of hell, will never be raised to a state of holiness and happiness; but that their punishment will be endless.

It is therefore evident that God *does not intend* that every one of the human race shall be saved. Nor,

2. Does God design to do whatever he is able to do, for the salvation of all mankind.

Every human "heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." He has converted and saved some of the greatest and most hardened sinners. And he can, and will cause every person, whom he designs to save, to experience the salvation of the gospel. The same almighty power and invincible grace, which humbled the heart of Manasseh, purified Mary Magdalene, fitted the penitent thief for heaven, and caused the persecuting Saul to become a preacher of the faith he once labored to destroy, are sufficient to renew and sanctify the whole human race. But since many will perish, it is evident that God does not design to do what he has power to do, for the salvation of all mankind. From what is declared in the scriptures, there is reason to believe that God has *determined* that a part of mankind shall perish; and that he intends they shall be fitted for destruction. God said to the prophet Isaiah, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make

their ears heavy, and shut their eyes : lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." Again he says by the same prophet, " Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself ; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel ; for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared and be taken." And again, " The word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little and there a little ; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." From these declarations it appears, that God did not intend that the instructions he gave the Jews should be the means of their conversion and salvation ; but that by these instructions, he intended they should be hardened and fitted for perdition. Though the Lord Jesus Christ preached, and wrought many miracles among the Jews, " yet they believed not on him : that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake ; Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe because that Esaias had said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart ; that they should

not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." The apostle says to the saints at Rome, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded: According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear." Again he says, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." The apostle Peter says to his Christian brethren, "Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious; but unto them who be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." If then we believe what God has declared, we must believe, that he has determined that a part of mankind should be vessels of wrath; and that he intends they shall be fitted for destruction.

It may then be asked, How can it be true that God desires the salvation of every one of mankind? To this it may be answered,

3. God desires the salvation of every human being, *in itself considered.*

Notwithstanding the preceding observations, God may, in this sense, desire the salvation of every one of mankind. And it is easy to see that the text, and similar declarations in the bible may be truly and fairly understood, and explained in this sense. In any contrary sense, it is certain that they cannot be consistent with other declarations of the scriptures, nor with the most evident facts. God may be, not only willing that every one of the human race should be saved, but he may greatly desire the salvation of every one, in itself considered; although he determine that a part of mankind shall perish, and although he fit them for destruction. The eternal happiness of an immortal soul is exceedingly important and desirable. The eternal happiness of one soul, is, in itself, as truly valuable as the eternal happiness of another soul. The salvation of Cain, and Pharaoh, and Judas, was, in itself, important and desirable, as well as the salvation of Abel, and Moses, and Peter. Therefore, God must have desired the salvation of the former persons, simply considered, as really as the salvation of the others. Many things, which in themselves are highly desirable, are not best, all things being considered. And many things, which it is best should exist, all things being considered, are, in themselves, very great evils. A tender father may desire that an undutiful child should be freed from the pain of correction, in itself considered; and yet, all things being considered, he may very painfully correct his undutiful child. A com-

passionate judge may greatly desire the life of a criminal, simply considered; and yet condemn the criminal to death, and rejoice in the execution of the sentence. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ, in itself, was to the Father, a very great evil, and exceedingly disagreeable. Yet, all things considered, the Father was pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief. Christ desired, and earnestly prayed to be delivered from his sufferings; yet he was willing and determined to suffer the accursed death of the cross. Though he did not, on the whole, desire to be delivered from crucifixion; yet, in itself, he greatly desired it. Though God may not, all things being considered, desire the salvation of all mankind; yet, simply considered, he may greatly desire that every one of the human race should be saved.

Having explained the doctrine, it is now, in the second place, to be proved that God desires, in itself considered, the salvation of every human being.

1. This is evident from the divine character. "God is love. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." As God is a being of perfect and infinite benevolence, from his own nature he hates whatever is evil, and desires the greatest good that can exist. He will, therefore, in itself considered, desire the greatest good of every one of his creatures. If the righteous man regard

the life of his beast, how much more does God regard the eternal happiness of every immortal soul. If there were one soul, whose salvation God did not desire, in itself, there would be reason to believe that he is destitute of goodness. If God desired the endless perdition of one soul, or an hour's pain of any rational creature, or the least distress of the least insect, in itself; he would be malevolent. For malevolence consists in desiring what is evil, in itself, without regarding the good which may arise from its existence. As God is perfectly benevolent, he can never delight in sin, nor in misery; nor can he delight in their existence, simply considered. He hates every degree of sin and of misery. And as much as he hates what is evil, so much does he desire in itself, the eternal salvation of every one of the human race.

2. That God desires the salvation of every human being, in itself, is evident from what he has said. When the children of Israel said to Moses that they would hear and do all the Lord should command, God said, "Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children for ever." God here expresses an ardent desire for the everlasting happiness of all the generations of the children of Israel. Notwithstanding the numerous transgressions and provocations of his ancient people, God expressed, by his prophets, the most vehement

desire for their holiness and happiness. He said by Hosea, "My people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man." Admah and Zeboim were cities, which were consumed with Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone from heaven. Though God saw that his own people deserved a destruction as terrible as those cities suffered; yet such was his tender mercy and compassion, that he knew not how to execute the fierceness of his anger, while it could possibly be suspended. But he finally caused his wrath to fall upon that people to the uttermost. God says by Ezekiel—"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked die; and not that he should return from his ways and live?" And again, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." By death, here is meant, the endless perdition of the soul in hell. Though it is evident, from what God said by Ezekiel, that

some die this death; it is equally evident that in their death God hath no pleasure. In Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem, he declared his intense desire for the salvation of those persons, who were doomed to remediless destruction. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" By Peter it is written, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If God were not willing, all things considered, that any person should perish, he would condemn no one to final perdition. But though many persons will finally and eternally be punished; yet it is certain from what God has said, that he greatly desires, in itself, the salvation of all mankind.

3. That God desires the salvation of every man, in itself considered, is evident from the divine *conduct towards sinners.*

By the atonement through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has made provision sufficient for the salvation of all mankind. He has commanded the word of this salvation to be preached unto every creature. Wherever the gospel is preached, salvation is offered unto every person without exception or distinction. This salvation is offered on the best conditions. With great patience and forbearance, God

waits upon sinners that they may accept this gracious offer. He uses the best means to induce sinners to repent. He most cheerfully forgives every person, who repents of his sins and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. And he threatens to punish every one, who refuses to accept the salvation of the gospel, with peculiar and tremendous severity.

From the conduct of God towards sinners, as well as from what he has said, and from the divine character, it appears, that God desires the salvation of every one of mankind.

REFLECTIONS.

1. From what has been said in the present discourse, we may be assured that God never created any one of the human race *merely* for destruction. If God created any person merely for destruction, the destruction of that person must have been the chief end, which God designed to accomplish by bringing him into existence. The chief end which God designs to accomplish, by any of his works, must, in itself, be pleasing to him. If then God created any human soul merely for damnation, the eternal sin and misery of that soul must, in themselves, be pleasing to God. But it has been proved, in the present discourse, that God greatly desires, in itself, the salvation of every human being. It is certain then that he never created any person merely for destruction. If God were to bring creatures into existence solely for the purpose of causing them to be

sinful and miserable for ever, he would be the most malicious and hateful being that could exist. Though God will punish many of mankind with endless destruction, yet no one was ever created merely for this purpose. In their punishment God acts according to wisdom, and truth, and justice, and goodness. He is influenced by the purest motives, and accomplishes the most important and desirable purposes. From what God said to Pharaoh, whom he destroyed, and whom he determined to destroy, and whom he fitted for destruction, it appears, that in designing and accomplishing the destruction of that reprobate, he designed and accomplished the very end, for which all persons pray when they offer the Lord's Prayer. In that prayer the first petition is, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." In offering this petition we profess to desire, supremely, that the name of God may be glorified. By destroying Pharaoh God shewed his power, and declared his name throughout the earth. And he greatly glorified his name by manifesting so clearly the glory of his perfections. By the destruction of other sinners, as well as of Pharaoh, the same great and glorious purposes will be answered. For, as it is written, "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil." God has made the wicked for himself, that he may, according to the counsel of his own will, effect his holy and wise designs. Nor would they have been created for the day

of evil, unless the glory of his great and holy name required their destruction. And if the glory of his name require the destrucion of all the sinners, who shall be for ever punished, what more important and desirable end could be effected or proposed? By the apostle the Holy Spirit asks, "What, if God willing to shew his wrath and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" By so doing God accomplishes the chief end, which he proposed to himself in the councils of eternity to effect, by his great and marvellous works. And this is the same end, which all holy beings supremely desire, and for which they earnestly pray. Since God desires, in itself, the salvation of every human being, and since such wise and holy purposes are answered by the endless punishment of those persons, who shall be destroyed, it is very false and very wrong to say, or to suppose, that God ever created any one of the human race, merely for destruction.

2. As God desires the salvation of every one of mankind, simply considered, his goodness will be very manifest in the endless punishment of those persons who shall be lost. God is as unwilling that any soul should perish, as he is desirous that every one should be saved. The destruction of a human soul must be, in itself, highly disagreeable to God. No one will ever suffer the endless torments of hell, unless the wisest and best reasons justify and demand his destruction. In the punishment of the wicked,

God cannot be influenced by a cruel and malicious spirit; but he is influenced by the highest and purest benevolence. God foresees the multitude and the magnitude of the transgressions, which every son of perdition will commit in eternity. He clearly perceives the tremendous weight of divine wrath, which every one that shall perish must endure. No being, but God, can form any conception of the endless sin and misery of one sinner, who shall fall into perdition. But as God fully realizes all the sin and misery of the vessels of wrath in eternity, their destruction appears in his view infinitely greater, than it can appear to any other being. Besides, he hates sin and misery infinitely more than they are hated by all other beings. In dooming rational creatures to a state of endless sin and woe, God executes a work which is, in itself, the most painful and distressing to his heart. How powerful, then, and inflexible is the goodness of Jehovah, in the endless damnation of immortal souls, whose salvation, in itself, he most ardently desires!

There are several considerations which may more clearly illustrate the goodness of God, as it is manifested in the perdition of sinners.

First, Their destruction is mentioned in the holy scriptures as an evidence of divine goodness. When Moses said unto God, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory;" he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." According to his promise, God passed before Moses and proclaimed his name; "The Lord, the

Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." When God proclaimed his name, and caused all his goodness to pass before Moses, he declared that he would *by no means clear the guilty*. From his own words, then, it is evident, that God manifests his goodness in the punishment of sinners. In the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm, the everlasting mercy of God is celebrated; and many instances in which God had manifested his mercy are mentioned. The Psalmist there says, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him, who smote Egypt in their first-born; for his mercy endureth for ever; and brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth for ever: But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who smote great kings; for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon, king of the Amorites; for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og, king of Bashan; for his mercy endureth for ever." Here the terrible manifestations of divine wrath, in the destruction of sinners, are adduced as evidences of the

goodness and everlasting mercy of God. It is evident, then, from the divine testimony, that God manifests his goodness in punishing sinners.

Again, The friends of God when divinely inspired, have prayed that the wicked might be destroyed. In the song of Deborah and Barak, which they sang when God destroyed the enemies of Israel, they say, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." The Psalms abound in imprecations against the wicked. The Psalmist says, "Destroy thou them O God: let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee." Again he says, "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their deserts." And again, "Consume them in wrath, consume them that they may not be, and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth." Once more he says, "Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare let it become a trap, let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them: and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them." Jeremiah says unto God, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Again he says, "Ren-

der unto them a recompence, O Lord, according to the work of their hands. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse upon them. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord." These persons, in praying for the destruction of the wicked, were not influenced by a spirit of revenge and malevolence. They prayed as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In answering such holy prayers, although the wicked be destroyed, the goodness of God will be gloriously manifested.

Finally, The righteous praise God for destroying the wicked. When God had destroyed Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song of praise. In this song they say unto God, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Who is like unto thee among the Gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" In the song, which God gave to Moses for the children of Israel, he commands the nations to rejoice in view of his vengeance on his enemies. "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants and will render vengeance to his adversaries." Having described the desperate wickedness, and fearful perdition of the ungodly, the Psalmist says, "The righteous shall rejoice, when he seeth the vengeance." When the seven angels appear with the seven last plagues, the

saints are described as having the harps of God, and as singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. In this song they sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." At the destruction of mystical Babylon, God says, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye, holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." John then says, "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia, salvation and glory and honour and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, who did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God, that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia! And a voice came out of the throne saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and all ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying Alleluia! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Since all holy beings praise God for destroying the wicked, it is

evident that in their destruction he manifests his goodness. While he renders "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, unto every soul of man that doeth evil," it will be for ever known to all his rational creatures that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. The wicked as well as the righteous will be convinced, that God is influenced by the purest benevolence, in shewing his wrath and making his power known upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; as well as in making known the riches of his glory, upon the vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory. AMEN.

SERMON II.

LUKE XIV. 17.

Come; for all things are now ready.

Our Saviour commonly taught his hearers, by parables, the important lessons which he desired them to learn. His parables were suited to awaken their attention, and to impress his instructions on their minds. One of his parables contains the text. A man, who sat at meal with him, having heard his words, said unto him, "Blessed is he, that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said Jesus unto him, a certain man made a great supper and bade many and sent his servant, at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, come; for all things are now ready." From what the servant said to the persons, who were bidden to the supper, it appears that all things were prepared, in the best manner, for their entertainment. The supper, which is mentioned in this parable, represents the provision, which God has made in the gospel, for the salvation of sinners. And the text represents the message which is to be delivered to sinners, by the ministers of the gospel. The words of the

text then plainly teach us—That God has done, in the best manner, what was necessary that sinners might be saved. To illustrate this doctrine it is proposed,

I. To enquire what was necessary to be done, that sinners might be saved.

II. To show that what was necessary, that sinners might be saved, has been done. And,

III. To show that what was necessary, that sinners might be saved, has been done, in the best manner.

I. Enquire what was necessary to be done, that sinners might be saved.

All mankind are under a law, which binds them to love their Creator with all their hearts; and to love their fellow creatures as themselves. Eternal life is promised to every one, who perfectly obeys this law. And eternal death is threatened to every one, who in the least transgresses it. As it is written, "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man, who doeth these things, shall live in them." It is also written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Cursed is every one, who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now all mankind, by nature are sinners. For it is written, "The whole world

lieth in wickedness. There is none that doeth good; no, not one." As all mankind have transgressed the law, they deserve the threatened curse, which is eternal death. Hence arises the important enquiry—What must be done that sinners may be saved? To this enquiry it must be replied, that the salvation of no sinner is possible, unless the design of God in threatening eternal death to every transgressor, be fully answered. God never delights in misery. He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." God is "merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." But neither truth, nor goodness, nor mercy, nor grace, requires God to countenance sin. The truth and goodness of God require him to manifest his hatred of sin and his regard to the law. If God cannot forgive sinners, and yet show that he hates sin as much as the threatening of the law implies, every sinner must for ever suffer the weight of his holy wrath. But if God can fully manifest his regard to the law, which threatens eternal death to every sinner, and yet the sinner be saved; then the mercy of God will rejoice against judgment. Then God will delight to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin. For then no evil, but great good, will arise from pardoning sinners. But if God should forgive sinners, without manifesting his hatred of sin as fully and clearly as though every sinner should suffer the threatened curse; his character would be ruined, his government would be

destroyed and all happiness be banished from the universe. That sinners might be saved it was therefore necessary, that God should show his regard to the law and his hatred of sin, to as great a degree, as if the whole human race should have suffered the pains of eternal death. It is,

II. To be shewn that what was necessary, that sinners might be saved, has been done.

This has been done through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Him "hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." The justice of God demanded the endless punishment of all mankind; or such a sacrifice as should atone for their sins. God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation for the sin of the world. The prophet Isaiah says of Christ, "He was wounded for our transgressions: he was bruised for our iniquities." The apostle says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God sent forth his Son, made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law. God hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. God sent forth his Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in

the flesh, that the righteousness of God might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Christ is called "the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the whole world." He is called, "The propitiation for the sins of the whole world". From what is said of Christ in the holy scriptures, it is evident that he hath suffered for the same purpose, for which sinners were condemned to suffer. But God condemned sinners to suffer from his regard to the law, and from his hatred of sin. Since his regard to the law, and his hatred of sin, have been fully and clearly manifested in the sufferings of Christ, God "can be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

But do the sufferings of Christ, on the cross, manifest God's hatred of sin to as great a degree, as though the whole human race should have suffered the punishment which is threatened in the law? It is believed that they do. Should an earthly king punish a number of his subjects, who had rebelled against him, it might seem as if he were influenced by personal resentment. But should he subject himself to severe and shameful sufferings, or inflict such sufferings on one, whom he loved as himself, that he might show his regard to the government, and his abhorrence of rebellion against it; then all his subjects would at once see that their king was influenced by a pure and impar-

tial love of truth and justice. If God had punished all mankind according to the threatening of the law; it might have been pretended by his false and rebellious creatures, that he was influenced by a revengeful spirit, and by a selfish regard to his own government. But when the well beloved Son of God, who is one with the Father, stands to suffer in the stead of sinners; then if God do not slacken his indignation, every rational creature must know that he punishes sinners, not because he is selfish and revengeful, but because he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and because he is determined, from the wisest and best motives, to support the authority and glory of the law, though at the greatest expense. Now when the Lord Jesus Christ stood to suffer in the stead of sinners, God did not in the least suffer his wrath to cool; but he vented the flame of his hot displeasure against sin upon his well beloved Son. God said "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd; against the man that is my fellow. Smite the shepherd," The well beloved Son of God was not spared, until the sword of divine justice was satiated with his blood. God was pleased to bruise him and put him to grief. God exhausted the vehemence of his anger against sin upon the Son of his love, that his enemies might be saved from the pains of eternal death. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He that spared not his own Son, but de-

livered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things?" It is now,

III. To be shown that what was necessary, that sinners might be saved, has been done, in the best manner. This will be evident, if we consider,

1. That God will forgive the greatest sinner, who repents, however many and however great his sins. No sinner needs to perish, because his sins are too great for God to pardon. To the most wicked, on their repentance, God will say, "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy trangressions and will not remember thy sins." "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Again, it is said, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." Christ says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." These words of Christ are not idle and unmeaning sounds. For some of the greatest sinners have been saved by him, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.

The apostle tells the church at Corinth that some of their number had been of the vilest characters. "But," he says, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It is then evident that God is able and willing, to forgive the greatest sinner, who repents, however many and however great his sins.

2. God will forgive the greatest number of repenting sinners, however great their number. If only a few sinners could be forgiven, there would be a very evident deficiency in what has been done for the salvation of men. If God could forgive only a few sinners, he could not consistently offer salvation to all. Nor would his ministers then know how to address their hearers. And their hearers would have some pretence for closing their ears and hardening their hearts, against the calls and offers of the gospel. But through the atonement of Christ, God has made provision sufficient for the salvation of all mankind. And to every person, where the gospel is preached, pardon and eternal life are freely and sincerely offered. Christ says by the prophet Isaiah, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." He commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." There would be no propriety in

this commission, unless God were able and willing to forgive the greatest number of sinners, who repent and believe the gospel, however great their number.

3. Upon repenting sinners God bestows blessings of infinite value. Such sinners are not merely saved from the present wrath of God, and from the endless punishment, which they deserve; but they are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: "an inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." Too often when men profess to forgive each other, there is an appearance of unkindness. The offender, though said to be forgiven, is still treated as guilty. But God treats repenting sinners with the utmost kindness. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He is their constant and faithful friend, while they are passing through this dark vale of tears. He makes their light affliction, which is but for a moment, work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He enables them to sing the song of triumph over death, and of victory over the grave. When their flesh and their heart faileth, he is the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever. He receives them to himself when they die. He then "wipes away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Repenting sinners shall for ever dwell in the presence of God,

where is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore. They are not only saved from the endless torments of hell; but they are made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

4. The blessings of the gospel are granted to penitent sinners on the easiest conditions. From eternity, God desired to exercise his loving kindness in the most gracious and endearing manner. He could not be contented to do good to such creatures only, as deserved no evil. He desired to manifest the greatness of his goodness, by bestowing eternal glory upon such creatures as deserved his eternal wrath. In the work of redemption, the desires of his heart are fully gratified. Upon every sinner, who repents and believes the gospel, God bestows eternal life and glory, upon the most desirable conditions. For sinners may obtain the great salvation, if they will only throw off the filthy rags of their own righteousness, and be arrayed in "fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints." If they will only leave their broken cisterns that can hold no water, and come to Christ the fountain of living waters, they shall have in themselves a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Hear what Christ says to sinners by the prophet Isaiah, "Ho every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." At Jerusalem, "in the last day, that

great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And now from heaven he is ever crying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come and sup with him, and he with me." "The spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is evident then that every sinner may receive the great salvation of the gospel, on the very easiest and lowest conditions.

5. All holy beings greatly rejoice in the salvation of repenting sinners. Among those who mind earthly things, there arise frequent and severe contentions. When one has received a favor, envy and malice rankle in the breasts of others. But when a vile and guilty worm of the dust is saved from endless punishment, and made an heir of glory, then all holy beings engage with all their hearts, to promote his happiness. In the parable of the prodigal, there is a striking description of the readiness and compassion, with which God receives and pardons repenting sinners. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." The angels greatly rejoice in the salvation of sinners. With what delight

and gratitude did the heavenly host praise God at the Saviour's birth, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." What love and joy are excited in the hearts of saints on earth, when sinners are called from their native darkness, into the marvellous light of the gospel; when they are delivered from the chains of Satan, and brought into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. By the salvation of every sinner, who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, the joy of all holy beings is greatly increased.

6. In the salvation of sinners, the great and holy name of Jehovah is for ever glorified. The law, by which every sinner is condemned, is holy, just and good. And the holiness, justice and goodness of God, would have shone with exceeding beauty and glory, if he had inflicted on all mankind, the endless punishment which is threatened in the law. But instead of dooming sinners to hopeless and endless woe, according to the law; through the unsearchable riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, he bestows upon every penitent and believing sinner, the perfect and eternal joys and glories of heaven. Now, "if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through

him. Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus : that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." In manifesting the exceeding riches of his grace through the redemption of the church, God gives the fullest and clearest exhibition of his divine perfections, and brings the highest glory to his great and holy name.

Since God is glorified, and all holy beings rejoice in the salvation of penitent sinners, and since the greatest number of penitent sinners, however many and however great their sins, shall be saved from endless wrath, and enjoy the glories of heaven on the easiest and best conditions ; it may well be declared, that what was necessary that sinners might be saved, has been done in the best manner.

REFLECTIONS.

1. From what God has done for the salvation of sinners, there is no reason to believe that all mankind will be saved. From the sufficiency of the atonement through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and from the offers of the gospel, there are many, who profess to be-

lieve in the salvation of all mankind. But neither does the sufficiency of the atonement, nor do the offers of the gospel secure the salvation of sinners. On this subject we may obtain instruction from the parable, which contains the text. Did not the man, who is mentioned in this parable, make a supper sufficient for all who were invited to his house? Were not all things prepared in the best manner for their entertainment? Were they not kindly called by the servant, and urged to come to the feast? Was it certain, though all this was done that they, who were bidden, would taste of the supper? "They all with one consent began to make excuse. Then the master of the house, being angry, said, I say unto you that none of the men, who are bidden, shall taste of my supper." Though God has in the best manner prepared the gospel feast, and made provision sufficient for the millions of the human race; though sinners be invited, and commanded, and intreated to accept of the great salvation; is it therefore certain that all mankind will be saved? What, if sinners with one consent pray to be excused from coming unto the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? Then, notwithstanding what God has done, and what Christ has suffered, if they be allowed to act according to such a choice, no one will be saved. Then Christ crucified will be preached unto sinners a savor of death unto death. Then sinners though favored with the means of salvation, will be formed into vessels of wrath, and fitted

for destruction. Now it is in the highest degree evident, from what God has said, and from the conduct of sinners, that they naturally refuse the salvation of the gospel, and reject the counsel of God against themselves. As none came to the supper, which is mentioned in the parable, but those persons who were brought, and those who were compelled to come; so none come to Christ for the blessings of the gospel, but they who are made willing in the day of his power, by the almighty and invincible grace of the Holy Spirit.

2. Since salvation is so offered to sinners, the reflections of those persons, who have rejected the offer and died in their sins, must be very distressing. When they were in this state of trial, they were taught their sin and guilt. They were informed of the gracious Saviour, and of his atoning blood. They were kindly warned to flee from the wrath to come. But though God called, in the most earnest and affecting manner, they refused to hear. Though he stretched forth his hand, they would not regard him. They set at naught his counsel, and despised his reproof. They would madly persist in treasuring unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And now indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish have come upon them to the uttermost. But though they now call upon God, he will not answer. "He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will

shew them no favor." Though they might have taken the water of life freely, they are now tormented in the flames of hell, nor can a drop of water ever be given to cool their tongues. They must for ever eat the fruit of their own devices. What now are the riches and pleasures and honours, for which they neglected the great salvation? What are the amusements, for which they despised the joys of heaven? What are the vain and wicked companions, by whom they were induced to contemn the Lord of glory, and the society of his chosen and happy people? What now avail their boasted morality and formal services of religion? What avail those false sentiments, which blinded their minds, and flattered their delusive hopes? Though they once held fast deceit, yet now the hail has swept away their refuges of lies, and the waters have overflowed their hiding places. Their covenant with death is dis-annulled, and their agreement with hell cannot stand. Have they not learnt the worth of those sabbaths, they could spend in stupidity? Do they not feel the importance of those sermons, they once heard with contempt and mockery? Does the salvation, they were urged to accept now seem a trifle? Does the damnation, they were warned and intreated to escape, now seem a jest? But though they might, on the best conditions, have enjoyed the glories of heaven, they are now cast into hell-fire, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Do they not exclaim—"Eter-

nity, O eternity! Must we for ever weep and wail, and gnash our teeth in these tormenting flames of the wrath of Almighty God!" How does the anguish of the damned pierce their souls, when they consider how foolishly and wickedly, they rejected the great salvation of the gospel.

3. In view of what has been done that sinners might be saved, great appears the sin of those persons, who continue impenitent, where the gospel is preached. The heathen know nothing of the glorious character of God, as it appears in the work of redemption. They have never once been told that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." They have never once been told that God forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, and that he will by no means clear the guilty. They have not once been forewarned of the exceeding and eternal weight of divine vengeance, which must fall upon the wicked in the future state. Yet the heathen are without excuse. And if the heathen have no excuse for their wickedness, what is the sin and the guilt of those persons, who often hear, and as often despise the gospel of the grace of God? When the great salvation of the gospel is urged upon sinners from sabbath to sabbath, and from year to year; when they are constantly reminded of the endless perdition of every one, who rejects this salvation; when against the commands and warn-

ings, the threatenings and promises of God, they stop their ears, and shut their eyes, and harden their hearts, how does their sin and their guilt increase and abound! They despise the riches of the divine goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering. Though they are exalted unto heaven, they are preparing themselves to be thrust into the lowest hell. The vilest heathen is less criminal than the most moral sinner, who continues impenitent under the light of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ said of the Jews, to whom he had preached, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. They have both seen and hated, both me and my Father."

Sinners had better have been heathen, they had better have been brutes, they had better never have been born, than to live and die in a christian land, without that repentance which is unto salvation. For according to their wickedness will be their punishment. And very great and peculiar is the wickedness of those persons, who remain impenitent where the gospel is preached.

4. They, who now reject the salvation of the gospel, have no reason to conclude that they shall accept it at some future time. The impenitent, who attend on the preaching of the gospel, are generally delaying for the present, to comply with its requirements. Yet they often resolve that they will, at some future time, secure the salvation of their souls. But what

reason have they, who now reject the blessings of the gospel, to conclude that they shall ever repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? The conditions of salvation can never be altered. Nor will a compliance with those conditions ever become more easy. Will the hearts of sinners, after they have been hardening in sin a longer time, be more obedient and submissive to the authority of Christ? They, who are now impenitent are under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. They are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. They are every moment in danger of falling into eternal and remediless destruction. If, in this situation, they reject the only security against the endless perdition of their souls, and harden their hearts against God, why do they flatter themselves that they shall accept salvation at some future time? Let those, who now refuse to accept the offer of life, determine at what future time they will certainly repent and believe the gospel. Every sinner may be assured, that the present time is the best for complying with the kind and gracious calls of God. They, who refuse to accept salvation at the best time, and when it is offered on the best conditions, have no reason to conclude that they shall, at some future time, accept that salvation, which they do now reject.

5. From what has been said in the present discourse, it is evident, that they, who are lost, perish wholly through their own fault. If all mankind had been for ever punished for transgressing the divine law, they would have been

blameable for their own destruction. If a Saviour had never been given, and if salvation had never been offered, every sinner would have been justly punished, and the blame of his destruction must have been wholly charged upon himself. Now since a Saviour has been given, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through him, and since salvation is offered to sinners on the easiest and best conditions, they who are lost, will for ever feel, with the keenest sensibility, that they perish through their own sin and folly. Should you ask one, who has died impenitent, and who is now suffering the torments of hell, whom he blames for his misery, would he not be obliged to blame himself? Should you yourself lose the endless joys of heaven, and suffer the endless sorrows of hell, on whom will you charge your ruin? Will you blame God for your damnation? He will say you despised and rejected my counsel against yourself. Will you blame Christ for your damnation? He will say, you hated me without a cause. Will you blame the Holy Spirit for your damnation? You did always resist his instructions and warnings. Will you say the conditions of salvation were too hard? On what conditions then would you have accepted salvation? When in the torments of hell, you shall raise your eyes to heaven, and see the redeemed in the kingdom of glory; to your own folly and wickedness, you will be obliged to charge your loss of their enjoyments. After weeping and wailing and gnashing your teeth,

for thousands and millions of ages, you will look forward to an eternity of the bitterest anguish; and to your own folly and wickedness, you will be obliged to charge the eternal and immense weight of divine wrath, which you must endure. Since pardon and eternal life are freely offered you in the gospel, if you perish, your eternal damnation must be wholly charged to your own sin and folly.

Finally, they who now refuse the blessings of the gospel, have great reason to fear that they are fitting for destruction. Though such persons despise and abuse the mercy and forbearance of God, yet they flatter themselves that they shall not perish. But they have reason to fear, that though God does not, for the present, execute his threatenings against the wicked, he is only delaying the day of his wrath, that they may complete the measure of their sins, and render themselves more fit for the manifestation of the fierceness of his anger. "God is jealous and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" The Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel hath said—"Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." Though delaying sinners may think themselves secure, yet while they are rejecting the mercy of God, they are rapidly fitting for the vehemence of his indignation. Their "judgment

now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." God hath said, "to me belongeth vengeance, and recompence, their feet shall slide in due time. For the day of their calamity is at hand and the things that come upon them make haste." Since such is the wrath of God against his enemies, and since their destruction is hastening every moment, they who now reject the mercy of God are in the utmost danger of eternal perdition. The longer they refuse to accept salvation, the more reason there is to fear that they are of that number, who are not given to the Lord Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption. The longer they walk in the way to eternal death, the more reason there is to fear, that they were not ordained to eternal life. The longer they harden their hearts against God, the more reason there is to fear, that God never will change their hearts by his special and almighty grace. Every one, who is now rejecting and abusing the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, has great reason to fear, that he is a vessel of wrath, and that he is fitting for that destruction, by which God intends to show his wrath and make his power known. For it is written, "He, that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, "*To day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. *To day*, if ye will hear his voice, *harden* not your hearts. *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*"

AMEN.

SERMON III.

REVELATION XXII. 17.

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

THOUGH water be highly valuable, it is obtained without any expense. Hence in the holy scriptures, the blessings of the gospel are often compared to water. These blessings, though they be of the greatest value, are freely offered to sinners. By the prophet Isaiah, God says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." In the text the same blessings are offered in the same manner. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." These words afford for our consideration this important doctrine: To every one, who will accept the blessings of the gospel, they are freely given.

To illustrate this doctrine it may be observed,

1. That through the atonement, God can bestow the blessings of the gospel upon sin-

ners freely. The law threatens eternal death to every sinner. But the Lord Jesus Christ, by his death on the cross, has made an atonement for sin. And now God can, consistently with his truth and justice, release from the punishment which is threatened in the law, every person who avails himself of Christ's death. For "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." God can "be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." In the wondrous scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other." Truth consents to have mercy bestowed upon sinners, to whom wrath was threatened. And righteousness consents to offer peace to the enemies of all righteousness. Since Christ, by his death, has made an atonement for the sin of the world, God can, consistently with his perfections, and his righteous government, freely bestow upon sinners the blessings of the gospel.

2. God is glorified in bestowing the blessings of the gospel freely upon sinners. The wisdom, power and goodness of God shine, with infinite glory, in the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ. To the saints at Rome, the apostle writes, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And unto the church at Corinth, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them

who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Again, it is written, "To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The goodness of God, as well as his wisdom and power, is displayed in the redemption of sinners. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." The truth, the justice, and the power of God, would have been gloriously displayed, had he inflicted on the whole human race the curse of the law. But the goodness of God moved him to desire a way, in which he might forgive and save sinners from eternal death. Such a way his wisdom enabled him to devise, and his power enabled him to execute. And now all the perfections of God appear very glorious in the salvation of sinners. At the Saviour's birth, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God; saying, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will towards men." Since God is glorified in bestowing the blessings of the gospel upon sinners freely, these blessings may be freely given.

3. In the holy scriptures it is plainly asserted, that the blessings of the gospel are freely bestowed upon every one, who is saved. According to the scriptures the salvation of sin-

ners, from the foundation to the top-stone, is through the free grace of God. God freely gave his beloved Son to die on the cross to make an atonement for the sin of the world. Of his free mercy he offers salvation to sinners. He appoints and maintains the means of instruction and salvation. By the Holy Spirit, who works in a free and sovereign manner, the ministry of the gospel is made effectual to the conviction, conversion and sanctification of sinners. The Psalmist says to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." It is said of Christ, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." To the saints at Ephesus it is written, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The apostle says in his epistle to Titus, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The Saviour, the Holy Spirit, and all the fruits and benefits of the Spirit, are the gift of God. From the plainest declarations of the holy scriptures, it is therefore evident, that the salvation of sinners through the gospel of Jesus Christ, is wholly of grace; and

consequently upon all who are saved it is freely bestowed.

4. Sinners have nothing to give for the blessings of the gospel. All creatures have received their existence from God, and on him they are wholly dependent. They are the property of God. They are bound to exert all their strength in his service. They, who perfectly keep all the commandments of God, do nothing but what they ought to do. Therefore by their obedience they lay God under no obligation to bestow upon themselves the least favor. God is bound to reward such creatures as keep the law, not on account of the merit of their obedience, but on account of his own promises, by which he binds himself in the covenant of works. The holy angels, who have served God with all their strength, during their whole existence, have no claim upon God, on account of their obedience. God is in no degree indebted even to the holy angels for their services. They have done nothing but what he justly demanded, and what they were bound to do. "Who hath first given to the Lord and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." What then can the children of men offer to procure favors from God? What merit can they plead? They have broken the law of God, and are indebted to divine justice ten thousand talents, nor can they make the least satisfaction for their transgressions. For, should a sinner now become perfectly holy, and

serve God for ever with all his strength, he would do no more than his duty. He would make no atonement for the least of his past transgressions. But sinners, while impenitent, are wholly destitute of what is pleasing to God. Their hearts are full of wickedness, and all their actions are wholly sinful. They are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Their poverty and misery will continue and increase until they come to Christ, and receive the blessings of the gospel. But, for these blessings they have nothing to give. It is certain then, that the blessings of the gospel must be freely given to sinners, or they can never be enjoyed.

5. All mankind are guilty creatures. That every one of the human race is a sinner, and that every sinner deserves the curse of the law, we are most plainly taught in the holy scriptures. On these facts the whole gospel is founded. Now, if all mankind are justly condemned to endless punishment, the salvation of sinners, and all the blessings they ever enjoy, must be freely given. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The apostle, having proved the wickedness and ill desert of all mankind, draws the following inference: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." He then declares the way of justification through Jesus Christ. He says, "For all have sinned and

come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." If mankind be guilty creatures, it is impossible that they should be saved, but through grace. Since all have sinned and deserve the curse of the law, the blessings of the gospel must be freely given to every one, who is saved from eternal death, which is the wages of sin.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Since the blessings of the gospel are freely given, it is evident that morality avails nothing towards obtaining these blessings. There are many persons, who think very highly of their moral conduct, and fondly imagine that their morality will ensure to themselves the favor of God. Though they may profess to depend upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus for salvation, yet such a dependence is merely professed. It is not realized. The words and the actions, the views and the feelings, of such persons, prove that their hope of salvation is founded entirely upon their morality. If they ever feel the least need of divine mercy, they suppose that their morality affords a firm claim upon God for his favor. But if the blessings of the gospel are freely given, they are never bestowed upon any persons on account of their moral conduct. Should the most moral man that ever lived, plead his morality for the purpose of obtaining the favor of God, how would God treat his plea? He would inform

him, that it is not by works of righteousness, which men have done, but according to his mercy, that any of the sinful and guilty race of Adam are received into his favor, and saved from endless wrath. It is written, "A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." No one, who is acquainted with the holy scriptures, needs to be informed that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is a distinguishing and fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The apostle writes to the churches of Galatia, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." By placing dependence on their own works for salvation, they rejected the gospel of the grace of God. And the gospel is now rejected by every person, who expects to obtain salvation, in the least, on account of his morality. If a person cannot claim eternal life as the reward of his morality, and as what God is bound in justice to bestow, then morality avails nothing towards obtaining the favor of God. The favor of God must be obtained by works, or through grace. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." Now the salvation of the gospel is wholly of grace and not of

works in the least. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Moral sinners, as well as other sinners, are condemned by the law to endless perdition. There is the same place of torment prepared and appointed for moral and immoral sinners, who continue impenitent. And for moral and immoral sinners, there is the same way of justification and salvation. However moral a person may be, he must perish unless he wholly renounce his morality, and depend entirely upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. For whoever perceives that the blessings of the gospel are freely given, will at once perceive that morality avails nothing towards obtaining these blessings.

2. If the blessings of the gospel are freely bestowed, then God is not induced to grant these blessings, by the religious performances of impenitent sinners. The impenitent may be not only moral in their external conduct, but also abundant in their religious performances. The Pharisee could say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess." Paul before his conversion "was taught according to the perfect law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God." After the strictest sect of their religion, he lived a Pharisee. Touching the righteousness, which is in the law, he was blameless. Others as well as Paul have been zealous and abundant

in their religious performances while impenitent, and have flattered themselves that they were in a state of peace and safety. Whitefield says in one of his sermons, "I know by sad experience what it is to be lulled asleep with a false peace. Long was I lulled asleep. Long did I think myself a Christian, when I knew nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ. I used to fast twice a week. I used to pray sometimes nine times a day. I used to receive the sacrament constantly, every Lord's day. And yet I knew nothing of Jesus Christ in my heart. I knew not I must be a new creature. I knew nothing of inward religion in my soul." He was afterwards convinced, that all these performances were as filthy rags, and that they could avail nothing towards obtaining the favor of God. To the Scribes and Pharisees, the Lord Jesus Christ said, notwithstanding all their religious performances, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful without, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." By the apostle the Holy Spirit plainly and decisively condemns all the performances of the impenitent. He says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It ought to be considered

that whatever any persons may do, while they are impenitent, is wholly sinful. But if the religious performances of the impenitent were as good as they suppose; if they were not an abomination in the sight of God; yet they would avail nothing towards obtaining the blessings of the gospel. For as these blessings are freely bestowed, they are never given on account of the religious performances of sinners. Whatever the impenitent may do, they must perish, unless they wholly renounce their religious performances. Their utmost strivings and exertions avail nothing towards inducing God to bestow those blessings, which are freely given through his own mercy in Jesus Christ.

3. As the blessings of the gospel are given freely, it is very criminal for the impenitent to attempt to obtain these blessings by their religious performances. When sinners are in some degree awakened, they place great dependence upon their own exertions and amendments. If they do not expect to merit salvation by their religious performances, yet they imagine that in this way they shall induce God to show mercy. They think God ought to regard their tears, and prayers, and distresses. They have hard thoughts of God, because he does not relieve their burdened souls. But while persons endeavor to obtain the favor of God, by their tears, and prayers, and exertions, they reject the blessings of his grace. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they refuse

to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. While sinners despise and reject the Lord Jesus Christ, and endeavor to obtain the favor of God by their sinful performances, their conduct in his sight is very criminal, and very displeasing. He abhors and rejects all their performances. He says, "When you stretch forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear." Impenitent sinners prefer the filthy rags of their own righteousness, to the pure and precious robes of Christ's righteousness. They endeavor to purchase, by their sinful performances, what God freely gives through the blood of his well-beloved Son. The conduct of sinners, who attempt to obtain the favor of God, by what they can do, resembles the conduct of Simon, the Sorcerer. "When Simon saw that through laying-on of the hands of the apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." The conduct of Simon was highly sinful and provoking, and his state was very dangerous and alarming. And very sinful and provoking is the conduct, and

very dangerous and alarming, the state of impenitent sinners, however they may be awakened, and convicted, and engaged, in their unholy performances. While they rely upon their own services and reject the Lord Jesus Christ, they think to purchase eternal life, which is the gift of God, if not with money, yet with their impenitent performances, which are wholly sinful and very hateful in the sight of God. An attempt to obtain from God the greatest blessings which he freely bestows, by such conduct, is highly criminal. And of this highly criminal conduct, every sinner is guilty, while he endeavors, by his religious performances, to obtain the blessings of the gospel.

4. Since God freely bestows upon sinners the blessings of the gospel, it is easy to see what they must do to be saved. They must freely accept the blessings of the gospel.—Their duty is plainly taught in the text.—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Sinners are not required to depend on their moral conduct. They are not required to endeavor, by their religious performances, to obtain the favor of God. Nor are they required to make themselves better before they can obtain mercy. But they are required, and they are commanded to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and his great salvation, as they are freely offered in the gospel. How plain then, and how easy is the duty of sinners! How wicked and how unwise are they, who on account of their morality and religious perform-

ances, reject the counsel of God against themselves! If morality will avail any thing towards salvation; how moral must a person be, that by his morality he may obtain the salvation of the gospel? If the performances and exertions of the impenitent, will induce God to shew mercy; how long, and how much, must they strive and exert themselves, before they obtain mercy? Every one, who understands the bible, knows that whatever sinners may do while they are impenitent, they are nothing bettered, but rather grow worse. Every one, who has a right knowledge of divine truth, knows that notwithstanding all the morality and religious performances of the impenitent, they must perish unless they accept the blessings of the gospel as freely given. We ought to be very thankful that the duty of sinners is plainly taught in the holy scriptures. Christ says unto all the ends of the earth, "Look unto me and be ye saved!" Again he says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth. Come ye to the waters. And he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat. Yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price!" Again, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And again, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When the great multitude on the day of Pentecost, said unto Peter and unto the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of

Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When the jailor said unto Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." In the verse from which the text is selected, the duty of sinners is plainly and repeatedly declared.—From what God requires and commands, it is evident, that it is the duty of every sinner immediately to receive the blessings of the gospel as they are freely offered. And whatever a sinner may do, he must suffer the pains of eternal damnation, unless he freely accept the blessings of the gospel.

5. As the blessings of the gospel are freely given, we may see why Christians experience so small a degree of spiritual enjoyment. When persons first believe the glad tidings of the gospel, they usually experience an high degree of holy delight. Religion then affords more happiness in a few hours, than the world with all its possessions and enjoyments can ever afford. Yet many Christians pass the most of their days without any high degree of religious enjoyment. And why is it so? It is not because the delights of religion are exhausted. Nor because God is unwilling to bestow upon his children the joys of his salvation. Nor because the blessings of his grace are offered on difficult conditions. Nor because Christians are happy, while they have no enjoyment in religion. The pleasures of the world are poi-

son to their souls. They had rather be door-keepers in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. But since the blessings of the gospel are freely given, it must be owing to the self-righteousness of Christians, that they are so distitute of spiritual enjoyment. Being self-righteous they are loath to accept the blessings of the gospel as a free gift. Though they profess to look unto God for mercy, yet they are prone to rely upon their past experiences, or their religious services, or their good frames. Or they are prevented from looking unto God by a consideration of their unworthiness and ill-desert. They who come to God in a humble and believing manner, always receive the blessings they ask. God "filleth the hungry with good things." If Christians would receive and enjoy spiritual favors, they must come unto God without money, and without price, and take the water of life freely. They will then have in themselves a well of water springing up into everlasting life. But all men naturally go about to establish their own righteousness. And a self-righteous spirit is not easily destroyed. It is ever struggling in the breasts of Christians. While self-righteousness prevails, they are unwilling to ask and to receive spiritual blessings on the humbling conditions of the gospel. But on these conditions they must be received by saints as well as sinners, or they cannot be enjoyed. It is therefore wholly owing to the self-righteousness of

Christians that they have so small a degree of holy and spiritual enjoyment.

6. Since to every one, who will receive the blessings of the gospel, they are freely given, sinners are able now to do what is necessary to their salvation. When a gift is offered to a person, and brought to his hand, what can hinder his receiving it? Is he not as able to receive, as he is to refuse the offered gift? If he refuses the gift, so offered, it is because he is unwilling, and not because he is unable to receive it. Whenever sinners are willing to be saved, nothing can hinder their salvation. And as this salvation is a free gift, nothing can be more easy and more pleasant than a compliance with the conditions of the gospel. Impenitence and unbelief are very difficult and unpleasant. "The way of transgressors is hard." But repentance and faith are always easy and pleasant. "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The Lord Jesus Christ says to laboring and heavy-laden sinners, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." It is easy and pleasant to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in the first instance; and so it is to perform all the duties of religion. It is more easy and more pleasant to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, than it is to profane the holy and blessed day of the Lord. It is more easy and more pleasant to come to the house of God with a holy heart, than it is to come with a sinful heart.—It is more easy and more pleasant to pray

with the spirit and with the understanding also; than it is to cast off fear and restrain prayer before God; or to profess to pray while the heart is not right with him. It is more easy and more pleasant to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also, than it is to mock God with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue. It is more easy and more pleasant to hear with faith and love, the great doctrines and duties of the gospel, than it is to hear of these doctrines and duties while the heart is full of enmity and unbelief. It is far more easy and more pleasant to walk in the way to heaven, than it is to walk in the way to hell. It is more easy and more pleasant in every instance, to do right than it is to do wrong. If, then, sinners can refuse to repent, they can more easily repent of their sins. If they can refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they can more easily believe on his great and holy name. If they can sin, they can more easily become holy. Sinners are now able to repent of their sins, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to do what is necessary to their eternal salvation.

7. Sinners are justly required without delay to accept the offers of the gospel. God says to sinners—"Come now and let us reason together. Return ye now every one from his evil ways. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? Turn ye at my reproof. Choose you this day whom you will serve. How long halt ye between two opinions? Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now

is the day of salvation. To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die." You see how plainly and how kindly God teaches you, who are impenitent, your present duty. Now what hinders you from obeying the voice of God? Have you not too long been his enemies? Have you not too long hated the Lord Jesus Christ without a cause? Have you not too long resisted the Holy Spirit? Have you not too long rejected the counsel of God against yourselves? Will you still be deaf to the calls of mercy? Will you still harden your hearts in impenitence and unbelief? Have you fully resolved for ever to reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the great salvation he freely offers you in the gospel? Why then do you not now hear and obey his gracious voice? Will you say that you *cannot* accept the blessings of the gospel? But why is it, that you cannot accept these blessings? Is it because you are unable, or because you are unwilling, to take the water of life freely? Let the Lord Jesus, who is your final judge, decide. Long ago did he tell sinners to their face, "*Ye will not come unto me*, that ye might have life." Long ago did he say of sinners, "They have hated me without a cause." As he now condemns you for rejecting his salvatiom, so he will condemn you at

the final judgment, unless you repent and believe on his name. Will you then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved? Or will you reject this great salvation and be damned? The kingdom of God is now brought nigh unto you. God is witness, and your own soul is a witness, that life and death, heaven and hell, are now offered to your choice. You must now choose salvation or damnation. What then is your choice? Behold, "the Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." AMEN.

SERMON IV.

JOHN V. 40.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

THE Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. At the proper age, he entered on his public ministry. When he began to preach "the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Even his enemies bore testimony to the excellency of his preaching. When the Pharisees and the cheif priests sent officers to take him, the officers having returned and being asked why they had not brought him, answered, "Never man spake like this man." The spirit, the manner and the subjects of Christ's preaching were, in a great degree, peculiar to himself. He preached so plainly, that every one knew what he meant. And he preached so powerfully, that every one felt what he said. In this plain and powerful manner, he exhibited the most important and affecting truths. He taught his hearers the character of

the living and true God, and his universal agency and government. He taught the requirements, the obligation and the penalty of the law. He taught the native and total depravity of mankind, and their desert of the endless punishment, which is threatened in the law of God. He declared the scheme which God devised for the salvation of sinners, and fully stated the conditions of pardon and eternal life. He made known to his hearers the worth of salvation and urged sinners in the most affecting manner, and by the most powerful motives, to repent and believe the gospel, that they might be saved. He taught the certainty and the eternity of the future punishment, which God will inflict upon every person, who refuses, during the present life, to accept the salvation of the gospel. And with the greatest solemnity and compassion, he warned sinners to flee from the wrath to come. Yet his hearers generally refused to accept the offers of life, and disobeyed and opposed his heavenly instructions. At length, he declared to sinners the real cause of their criminal and dangerous conduct. He said "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." In discoursing on these words, it is proposed to prove,

That sinners are unwilling to be saved.

It is designed, first, to explain, and, then, to prove this doctrine. It is, in the first place, to be shewn what is meant when it is said, that sinners are unwilling to be saved.

1. It cannot mean, that they are unwilling to be delivered from future punishment. Every creature, that is capable of sensation, hates misery, and desires to be freed from every degree of pain. Mankind are willing to make great exertions and sacrifices, that they may escape, or remove the corporeal pains and disorders, which are experienced in the present life. Whenever any persons realize the endless misery, which awaits the impenitent in the future state, they are restless and distressed day and night, and earnestly enquire, what they must do to be saved. It is certain then, that sinners are willing to be saved from future punishment. Nor,

2. Are sinners unwilling to be for ever happy. A desire for happiness, is as great, and as common, as a hatred of misery. "There be many that say—Who will shew us any good?" All the cares and labors of men are for the purpose of obtaining happiness. They greatly exert themselves for the honors, and pleasures, and possessions of this world. They eagerly embrace every opportunity to obtain what is good in their own sight. No one is regardless of temporal enjoyments. Nor can any person look into eternity and feel no desire for future and eternal happiness. Certainly sinners can never be unwilling to be for ever happy. Nor,

3. When it is said that sinners are unwilling to be saved, is it meant, that they are *merely displeased with the conditions* of salvation. It is often said, that sinners are willing to be

saved, and would at once accept salvation, if it were offered on different conditions. Sinners commonly imagine, that the conditions of salvation are exceedingly hard, and they sometimes suppose, that with such conditions it is impossible to comply. They flatter themselves, that if the conditions of salvation were reasonable, they should readily accept the offer of life. Now it is very evident that the conditions of salvation are displeasing to sinners. And it is equally evident that there can be no conditions of salvation, with which they would not be displeased. For on such conditions, as differ from those stated in the gospel, it is not possible that sinners should be saved.—That they may be saved they are required in the gospel to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. By sinning they have brought upon themselves all the miseries of this life, and death itself; and are liable to the pains of hell for ever. While they continue in sin they will be not only more deserving of misery, but also incapable of enjoying rational and permanent happiness. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." It is then impossible for sinners to be happy, unless they comply with the conditions of salvation, as they are stated in the gospel. If with these conditions they are displeased, on what conditions would they accept salvation?

In the gospel they are required to come and receive the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life, on the easiest and best conditions. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." As the requirements of the gospel imply nothing more than a consent to receive salvation, sinners cannot be unwilling to be saved, merely on account of the conditions, on which salvation is offered in the gospel. If sinners were willing to be saved, they would not be displeased with the conditions of salvation. What then is meant, when it is said, that sinners are unwilling to be saved? To this question, it may now be answered,

4. It is meant, that they do not desire, and are not willing to receive the holy salvation of the gospel. This salvation includes a perfect deliverance from sin, as well as from misery, and the eternal enjoyment of the holy happiness of heaven. The Saviour is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. Christ "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Such is the salvation of the gospel. And this salvation, it has been asserted, sinners are unwilling to accept.

Here some one, perhaps, may be disposed to say, how can these things be? You tell us that sinners are willing to be saved from endless

misery, and to enjoy future happiness. You also say that no one, who is willing to be saved, can be displeased with the conditions of salvation. And yet you say that sinners are unwilling to be saved. Now I would ask, whether sinners can escape endless misery and enjoy future happiness, without accepting the salvation of the gospel? And if they cannot, then are they not as willing to be saved, as they are desirous of escaping future punishment, and of enjoying eternal happiness? To such an enquirer it may be replied, that there is no way to escape endless misery, and to enjoy future happiness, without accepting the salvation of the gospel. Yet there is a kind of happiness which sinners may desire, and which they may enjoy in the present life. They do desire, and they may enjoy the pleasures of sin, for a season. But though they desire, and though they may enjoy the sinful and hateful pleasures of sin, for a season; and though they desire with all their hearts to escape future misery, and to enjoy eternal happiness; yet they may be wholly unwilling to accept the holy salvation of the gospel. And it is now, in the second place, to be proved, that sinners are unwilling to be saved.

For this purpose it may be observed,

1. That sinners hate the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour. In the second Psalm, it is written, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder and cast

away their cords from us." In these words, the wicked express the highest enmity against Christ, the anointed king and Saviour. The prophet Isaiah says of Christ, "He is despised and rejected of men." Christ said to his brethren, "The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth." And to his disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me, before it hated you." The apostle represents himself and his Christian brethren, as having been the enemies of God. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God." To the saints at Philippi he says, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." To the saints at Colosse he says, "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." He describes the Gentiles as being universally "filled with all unrighteousness and wickedness," and as "haters of God." It is also written, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God." From the testimony of the living and true God, it is certain, that all mankind naturally hate the Lord Jesus Christ. And from this consideration, it is equally certain, that they are unwilling to receive the salvation, which is offered in the gospel, through his hated and despised name.

2. Sinners hate the knowledge of the truth

as it is in Jesus. Though all mankind have been favored with means for knowing the living and true God, yet as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, all who were not divinely and specially taught, have been involved in the grossest ignorance of divine things. They have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." The children of Israel, though they were so highly favored, preferred error to truth. They said "to the seers, see not, and to the prophets, prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits." Job describes sinners as saying unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Solomon says to the wicked, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" The Psalmist says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, going astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." To the conduct of serpents the Psalmist compares the conduct of sinners, who use every artifice to prevent their being charmed and taken, by the kind and pleasant voice of truth and love. John the baptizer, and Jesus Christ, called the sinners to whom they preached, serpents, and a generation of vipers. Sinners have all the

shyness and subtlety of serpents and vipers, in guarding themselves against divine truth. They shut their eyes, and close their ears, and make their hearts as "firm as a stone; yea hard as a piece of the nether millstone." Christ represents mankind, generally, as hating the light. He says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one, that doeth evil, hateth the light." Since sinners hate the knowledge of divine things, it is very evident, that they are unwilling to accept that salvation, which consists essentially in knowing the living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom the Father hath sent.

3. It is evident that sinners are unwilling to be saved, from their treatment of such persons, as have been the most concerned for their salvation. The ancient saints, and teachers, and prophets of God, "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned; they were sawn asunder; were tempted, were slain with the sword." When the Lord Jesus Christ came unto his own people, they did not receive him. Instead of receiving him, and his offers of salvation; they were angry at his words and sought to kill him. He said, "Ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you." Though the Pharisees, and Sadducees, and the Herodians, contended among themselves, their contentions were forgotten in

their common enmity against Christ. They showed the strength of their hatred and malice against Christ, by desiring and seeking to kill him. Nor could they rest, until they had put him to death on the cross. Christ forewarned his disciples, of the treatment which they should receive from the world, for his name's sake. And they received such treatment as their Lord foretold. They were hated. They were persecuted. They were stoned. They were imprisoned. And they were put to death. Now can any person suppose that they, who so treated the prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, when they were constantly and earnestly engaged for the salvation of immortal souls, were willing to be saved? Nor is there any reason to believe, that the present generation of sinners differs essentially from those who lived in former times. The difference in their conduct arises from the difference in their circumstances, and not from any essential difference in their characters. Whatever sinners may now think of themselves, they are no better than those sinners who hated and killed the prophets. They are no better than those sinners, who disbelieved and crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. They are no better than those sinners, who opposed and persecuted the apostles. If the present generation of sinners differ from those who have lived in former ages, they differ in their greater subtlety in opposing divine truth, and in their more stubborn and settled enmity

against the fuller and clearer light of the gospel. From the conduct of sinners at the present day, as well as in former times, towards such ministers and Christians, as are the most zealous and faithful, it is very certain that sinners are unwilling to be saved.

4. Sinners do refuse to accept the salvation of the gospel, although it is offered on the easiest and best conditions. Where the gospel is published, sinners are taught their depravity and ill-desert. They are taught that they are already condemned to endless punishment.—They are taught that God has given his well-beloved Son to die, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. And they are also taught, that he that believeth not shall be damned. To sinners, who are so instructed, God freely offers the forgiveness of all their sins, and eternal joy and glory in heaven. How do sinners treat the offer of these eternal and immense blessings? They obstinately refuse to accept this great salvation, and they treat God and his offers of life with neglect and contempt. A true account of their conduct is given in the parable of the great supper. As they who were bidden to the supper, "all with one consent began to make excuse;" so do sinners under various pretences, refuse to accept the salvation of the gospel. When Christ suffered the devils, that he had cast out, to enter into the swine of the Gadarenes, the whole multitude of the people in that country besought him to depart out of

their coasts. They preferred their swine with the company of the devils, to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And do not sinners, at the present day, prefer their sinful pleasures, or carnal ease, or worldly interest, or the filthy rags of their own righteousness, to the presence and favor of the holy and blessed Saviour? Even when God awakens and convinces sinners; when he places hell naked before their eyes, and destruction without a covering; when they are convinced of their total depravity, and their desert of endless punishment; when they are convinced that they are under the present wrath of Almighty God, and that they are every moment in danger of hell-fire; they will still refuse the salvation of the gospel. And they will refuse this salvation as long as they are sinners, however clearly they may see the glories of heaven, and the torments of hell. God says to sinners, "I have called and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."—Esaias saith, "Lord, who hath believed our report? All the day long I have stretched forth my hands, unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Sinners in every age, and in every country, and in every variety of circumstances, have, with one consent, rejected the counsel of God against themselves. They have refused, not once, nor twice, but every day, for many years, the great salvation, which is freely offered in the gospel. By refusing to accept this

salvation, when offered on the easiest and best conditions, sinners have proved, by their own conduct, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that they are unwilling to be saved.

5. Many sinners, to whom the gospel has been preached, have fallen into endless perdition. Multitudes, to whom the prophets preached, rejected the offers of mercy, and were fitted to destruction. Many to whom Christ offered the great salvation, perished in their sins. He told the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida, that it should be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for Tyre and Sidon, than for themselves. He also said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." In his parables, and his plain discourses, he threatened and foretold the endless destruction of the greater part of his hearers. He said, "Ye shall die in your sins." He also said, "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." The apostle declares that the ministry of the gospel is a savor of death unto death, to many who hear it. Great numbers to whom salvation is offered, give no evidence, either in their lives, or at their deaths, that they accept the gracious offer. But by their principles and practices, they afford sufficient reasons for believing, that they do finally reject the Sav-

iour, and perish for ever. But if sinners were willing to be saved, no one to whom salvation is offered would ever be lost. Since many, to whom salvation is freely offered, do perish, it is certain, that sinners are unwilling to accept the salvation of the gospel.

6. That sinners are unwilling to be saved, is evident from the experience of every saint.—Every one, who can give a scriptural reason of an hope that he is a Christian, knows from the convictions of his own conscience, and from the exercises of his own heart, that he is naturally unwilling to be saved. He is sensible that his carnal mind is enmity against God, and that it is not subject to the law of God, nor to the gospel of his grace. Every Christian knows, that when he was first awakened to a concern for his soul, he endeavored to establish his own righteousness, and refused to submit himself unto the righteousness of God. Christians know, that while they were impenitent, the more clearly they saw the character of God, and the purity of the divine law, the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, the more they hated Christ, as well as God, and the gospel as well as the law. They know that their enmity and opposition continued and encreased, until God, by a sovereign act of his sovereign grace, changed their hearts, and caused them to submit themselves with all their interests, into his holy hands. If there be Christians, who were converted when they were young, and who cannot distinctly remember a

work of conviction; yet their daily self-righteousness affords sufficient evidence of their native enmity against Christ Jesus and his blessed gospel. To confirm the doctrine, that sinners are unwilling to be saved, we may safely appeal to the experience of every saint on earth, and of every saint in heaven.

7. That sinners are unwilling to be saved, is evident from the experience of every sinner. Sinners are commonly ignorant and insensible of their own characters. But when they consider their desires and their actions, they have abundant evidence, that they do not desire the salvation of the gospel. And many sinners candidly confess it, even when they are under no special conviction of sin. When thoroughly convicted, sinners always feel and confess, that they hate Jesus Christ, and the gospel of his grace. No sinner can give any reason why he is in his present state, without admitting, that he is unwilling to receive the salvation of the gospel. To confirm the doctrine, that sinners are unwilling to be saved, we may safely appeal to the experience of every sinner on earth; and also to the experience of every sinner in hell.

REFLECTIONS.

1. If sinners reject the salvation of the gospel, then their depravity is very malignant.—Sinners are not only totally depraved, but their depravity is most malignant in its nature. It is declared to be so in the holy scriptures. It is written, "Their poison is like the poison of a

serpent. The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" John said to sinners, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The Lord Jesus Christ said to sinners, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He also said to sinners, "Now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Such is the description which the Holy Spirit has recorded of the malignant depravity, and desperate wickedness of the human heart. And when it is considered that every sinner hates the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejects the glorious salvation of the gospel, it is evident that this description of human depravity, is truly applied to every impenitent sinner. It is truly applied to young sinners, as well as to old sinners. It is truly applied to moral sinners, as well as to immoral sinners. It is truly applied to religious sinners, as well as to irreligious sinners. It is truly applied to enquiring and distressed sin-

ners, as well as to thoughtless and careless sinners. It is truly applied to sinners who profess to believe the holy scriptures, as well as to sinners who openly and boldly deny the blessed bible. It is truly applied to sinners who believe there is a God, as well as to sinners who say there is no God. It is truly applied to sinners on earth, as well as to sinners in hell. It is truly applied to the best, as well as to the worst of sinners. However sinners may differ in some respects, they are essentially of the very same moral character. Every sinner hates the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart, and refuses to come to him for life. For his love, sinners are his enemies. They hate him without a cause. Every sinner of whatever description, and whatever may be his profession or appearance, is truly and justly charged with the most malignant depravity and wickedness.

2. Sinners greatly deceive themselves, when they imagine, that they shall be willing to accept salvation at some future time. The impenitent, who hear the preaching of the gospel, often have some conviction of the great value of salvation. They are also fearful of the endless wrath of Almighty God. They hope to escape the torments of hell, and to be for ever blessed in heaven. Though they now delay and defer a thorough attention to the concerns of their souls, yet they fondly imagine that they shall at some future time, embrace the offers of life. On account of their present circumstances and engagements, or for some other impor-

tant considerations, they suppose they ought not to be blamed, though they now remain in impenitence and unbelief. Sinners are not usually conscious of their enmity against Jesus Christ, and his holy salvation. They really expect at some future time, to perform their duty, and secure the life of their souls. But by such expectations, they greatly deceive themselves. There is nothing to prevent their present acceptance of salvation, but the enmity and unbelief of their hearts. The longer they delay repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, the more violent will be their enmity against God, and the more malignant their unbelief. Sinners will be no more willing to accept salvation when they are old, than when they are young; when they are sick, than when they are well. They will be no more willing to accept salvation when they have accomplished their present schemes, than when they are careful and troubled about many things. Sinners will be no more willing to accept salvation in the hour of death, than when the king of terrors is at the greatest distance. They will be no more willing to accept salvation next year, than this year; next month, than this month; or to morrow, than to day. They are now unwilling to be saved, and so long as they remain sinners, they will wholly reject the salvation of the gospel. Though they may now resolve and promise to accept salvation at a future time, and though they now imagine they shall

then be willing to be saved, yet when that time shall come, they will forget or break their promises and resolutions. If they place the least dependence upon their present promises and resolutions, they do wholly deceive themselves. Thousands and thousands have so deceived themselves, and destroyed their immortal souls. Sinners, who are now relying upon their present promises and resolutions of future repentance, have already deceived themselves many times. And if they have done so in times past, why will they not do so in future? "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." And never are sinners guilty of greater and more alarming folly, than when they imagine they shall be willing to accept salvation at some future time, though they are now rejecting the counsel of God against themselves.

3. Since sinners are unwilling to be saved, if they be suffered to act according to their present choice, they will certainly perish. Sinners are able to perceive the excellence of the divine character, and that the divine law is holy, just and good. They are able to perceive the total depravity of their own hearts, and the total sinfulness of all their actions. They are able to see that they deserve the wrath and curse of God for ever. They are able to see the character and the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are able to see the necessity and the efficacy of the atonement which he has made by his death on the cross. They are able to see the conditions on which

salvation is offered to sinners. They are also able to see the weighty and powerful motives, by which sinners are urged and pressed to repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are able to repent of their sins, and to believe on the holy and beloved name of the great and blessed Redeemer. If they will only comply with the gospel, they shall be forgiven, be blessed and glorious for ever. But if they do not comply with the gospel, they must be accursed, and tormented, and ashamed through eternity. Yet they refuse to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They choose darkness, rather than light. They choose the slavery of Satan, rather than the liberty of the Sons of God. They choose the way to hell, rather than the way to heaven. They choose eternal death, rather than eternal life. They choose sin with its bitter fruits, rather than to be holy and happy for ever. Now since such is the fixed and settled choice of every sinner, if sinners be suffered to act according to their present choice, their endless damnation is as certain as their existence. They who suffer the damnation of hell, are only made to eat of the fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own devices. And eternal damnation will be the portion of every sinner, who is now on the earth, if he be allowed to act according to the present choice and purpose of his heart.

4. If sinners are unwilling to be saved, then unless God can change their hearts, there is no

hope of their salvation. Though sinners be able to repent and believe the gospel, yet as they always refuse to comply with the conditions of life, their natural ability to do their duty affords no reason to hope that they will be saved. No means, nor motives, which can be used with sinners, nor any conviction of truth and duty, which can be produced in their minds, will ever cause sinners to love what they hate, or to choose what they refuse. The moral character of sinners must be essentially and totally changed, so that they become new creatures; or they will for ever remain unwilling to be saved. If, then, God cannot, by his sovereign and almighty power, create in sinners a new heart, they will always hate the Lord Jesus Christ, and refuse to come to him for life. Some persons flatter sinners, that they are not in the hands of God. They pretend that men have a self-determining power, and that they act independently of divine influence. But if sinners act independently of divine influence, they will certainly perish. For they are unwilling to be saved, and God cannot change their wills, unless their hearts are in his hands, as the clay in the hands of the potter. Sinners are loath to believe that God has the constant and entire control of their hearts. They are loath to believe that God always produces in their hearts such moral exercises and volitions, as he pleases. They are loath to believe that he can enlighten, or darken their understandings; that he can awaken, or stupify their consciences,

that he can soften, or harden their hearts; and that he can save, or destroy their souls. But unless God can change the hearts of sinners, govern all their moral exercises, and form their moral characters as he pleases, it is as certain that every sinner will be lost, as it is that sinners are unwilling to be saved.

5. As sinners are unwilling to be saved, every sinner will perish, unless the doctrine of election be true. According to this doctrine, God has determined, in the counsels of eternity, to change the hearts of a certain number of mankind, and to make this certain number willing to accept the holy salvation of the gospel. If this doctrine be not true, there is no reason to hope that one sinner will be saved. For though God be able to change the hearts of sinners, he will not do it, unless he has determined to change their hearts. For God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." He declares "the end from the beginning; saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." No sinner will ever accept salvation, unless he be made willing to accept it by the power of God. And God by his power will make no one willing to be saved, except those very persons whom he gave to Christ in the covenant of redemption. Now if a part of the human race are not ordained to eternal life, if God has not chosen certain persons in the Lord Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love, being predestinated

unto the adoption of children; then there is no reason to hope for the salvation of immortal souls. The doctrine of election lays the only foundation of hope respecting the salvation of sinners. For though God desires the salvation of every human being, though he has made the best provision for the salvation of sinners, though salvation be offered to sinners on the easiest and best conditions; yet as every sinner is unwilling to be saved, we must wholly despair of their salvation, unless the doctrine of election be a true doctrine.

6. If it be through the wickedness of their hearts, that sinners reject the blessings of the gospel; then they are justly condemned for not doing what is necessary to their salvation.—Every sinner to whom the gospel is preached, is required to repent of his sins, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God now condemns sinners, and he will for ever punish sinners for their impenitence and unbelief. And why should they not be condemned and punished for their enmity against God, and for their hatred of his well-beloved Son? When God requires sinners to repent and believe, he requires nothing but what is right, and nothing but what every sinner ought to do. Nothing but the obstinate and malignant depravity of the sinner's heart, prevents a compliance with the requirements of the gospel. If God may justly require any thing of his rational creatures, he may justly require sinners to repent and believe the gospel of his grace. Yet many, who

profess to preach the gospel, never require sinners to exercise repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor do they blame sinners for their impenitence and unbelief. And sinners often imagine that if God does not change their hearts, they ought not to be blamed for refusing to come to Christ. They feel very confident that if God does not intend to change their hearts, but has determined that they shall be vessels of wrath, and be fitted for destruction; then God is to be blamed rather than themselves, for their rejection of the offer of life. But God did not intend to change the heart of Cain, or of Pharaoh, or of Judas. But he determined that they should be vessels of wrath, and be fitted for destruction. Yet were not Cain, and Pharaoh, and Judas, justly required to do right, and forbidden to do wrong, and condemned, and punished for their wickedness? Is God to be blamed for his decrees, and his conduct respecting Cain, and Pharaoh, and Judas? God does not intend to change the hearts of any of the non-elect.—But he intends, and has decreed, that they shall be vessels of wrath, and be fitted for that endless perdition, by which he designs to show his wrath, and make his power known. Yet are not the non-elect to be blamed and punished for their enmity against God, and for their endless blasphemies of his great and holy name? God does not intend to change the heart of Satan. But he intends, and has decreed that Satan shall be for ever filled with enmity and

wrath against the holy and blessed Redeemer, and against his chosen, his holy and happy people. But is not Satan to be blamed, and to be punished for his enmity and wrath against what is most excellent, beautiful and glorious? If Satan cannot be truly and justly excused for his wickedness, no sinner can be truly and justly excused for hating the Lord Jesus Christ, and for rejecting his holy salvation. Whether sinners be elected to salvation, or ordained to destruction; whether God designs to soften, or to harden the hearts of sinners; whether God has decreed that sinners should be vessels of wrath, or vessels of mercy; they are required, and they are bound to do right. Every sinner is required, and every sinner is bound to repent of his sins, and to believe the glorious gospel of the blessed God. This is the present, and the immediate duty of every sinner. And it will be the duty of every sinner during his whole existence, whether he be saved, or lost; whether he be elected, or reprobated; whether he be a vessel of wrath, or a vessel of mercy. It was for refusing to come to him for life, that the Lord Jesus Christ charged against the sinners to whom he was speaking, such desperate and malignant wickedness. For when, in the text, he said to sinners, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," he intended, not merely to state a fact, but to charge against his hearers, the greatest and worst crime that they could commit. And it is for refusing to come to the Lord Jesus Christ for life, that sinners,

who live and die under the light of the gospel, are to be for ever punished with peculiar and tremendous severity. Even those reprobates, whom God never designed to save, but whom he appointed and fitted to destruction, he charges with the greatest sin and guilt. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way; and be filled with their own devices." "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done des-

pite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Yet, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken in the prophets. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your day, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." For the Lord Jesus Christ says to sinners—"*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*"

AMEN.

SERMON V.

JOHN VI. 37.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

In the discourses, which the Lord Jesus Christ addressed to his hearers, he declared the plainest and most important doctrines. He also promised the greatest benefits to all, who would receive and obey his instructions. But though he was followed by multitudes of people, the number of his true disciples was very small.—After he had fed five thousand men with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come, and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." But though Jesus retired from the sight of the people, yet they sought him until they found him. When they had found him, they addressed him with great respect, saying, "Rabbi, when camest thou hith-

er ? Jesus answered them and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the son of man shall give unto you : For him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God ? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."— When he also said, " The bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world ; then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life ; He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Yet after all the instructions he had given, and all the promises he had made, he was obliged to repeat against his hearers the charge of unbelief. He says, " But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not." But though the multitudes, who followed him, generally disbelieved his instructions, and rejected his promises ; yet he consoled himself by the truths which he declared in the words of the text. " All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." In discoursing on these words of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is proposed to examine several enquiries, which

the text naturally suggests to our consideration. And the words appear to lead us,

I. To enquire whether God has decreed that a certain part of mankind shall be saved.

In the text, Christ speaks as if some persons were given him by the Father. He says all those persons shall come to him. And he also says that no one, who comes to him, shall in any wise be cast out. If what Christ said in the text be true, there appears to be some reason to believe that God has decreed that a part of mankind shall be saved. Whether God has formed such a purpose, is the subject of the present enquiry. That we may know the truth on this important subject, let us,

1. Consider whether God can be indifferent respecting the salvation of immortal souls. There is reason to believe that God is greatly interested in the present and future character and condition of every human being. Men are his creatures. They were created for his pleasure. They are his property. He knows their importance. He knows what happiness can be enjoyed, and what misery can be suffered, by an human soul in eternity. Can God then be indifferent respecting the salvation of immortal souls? He has often shown his concern not only for men, but even for inferior creatures. As one reason, why he should spare Nineveh, he told Jonah that there were in that great city "much cattle." He said to

the children of Israel, "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, whether there be young ones or eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young. But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thyself, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." The Psalmist says of God, "He giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry." (Christ said to his disciples, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.") Can it be supposed that God has such a concern for cattle, and for birds as he has expressed; (can it be supposed that he numbers the very hairs of our heads;) and yet is indifferent respecting the eternal character and condition of his rational creatures? Is God wholly indifferent whether any of the human race be saved? Or is he indifferent as to the number and the persons that shall be saved? If he has a choice respecting the salvation of immortal souls, why has he not formed a purpose respecting their salvation, according to his good pleasure?

2. Is not the salvation of immortal souls of too much importance to be left in uncertainty? Men think their houses are too important to be exposed to the devouring fire. They think their goods are too valuable to be left without

being secured against thieves. They are not willing their fields and fruits should be exposed to the trespasses of bad neighbors. When a small sum of money is due, men are not willing it should be uncertain whether they shall obtain what is owed. They choose to have the highest certainty respecting the affairs of the present life. And can God be willing that the salvation of immortal souls should be wholly uncertain? He thinks the salvation of one soul of greater importance than all the possessions and enjoyments of the present world. Christ said, "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The endless happiness of one soul, that is saved, will be far greater than all the happiness which has yet been enjoyed by all the creatures God has caused to exist. Since such is the importance of salvation, there is reason to believe that God is not willing that the number and the persons, who are saved, shall be wholly uncertain. But,

3. The salvation of immortal souls must be in a state of uncertainty, unless God has formed a purpose respecting their salvation. There is no reason to suppose that God ever acts, without designing to act. When God created the heavens and the earth, the sun to rule by day, and the moon to give light by night, and the stars also, he no doubt designed that they should be created. Nor was it ever uncertain, whether God would effect the work of creation. When Adam sinned, and involved himself and

all his posterity in sin and woe, if God had not designed that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, it must have been uncertain whether it would have been done. If God had not decreed that Abel should believe and be saved, that Enoch should walk with God and be translated, that Noah and his family should be saved from the flood, that Abraham should be called, and that his seed should be the peculiar people of God, that the coming of Christ should be foretold by the prophets, that he should appear in the fulness of time, that he should die on the cross to make an atonement for sin, that he should commission his apostles to preach the gospel, and that the Holy Spirit should be given to convince and convert sinners; and if God had not decreed what number and what persons, should be convicted and converted; then all these important events must have been wholly uncertain. Yet who can believe that the existence of these important events was ever uncertain? The most of these events were predicted. But it is impossible to predict what is wholly uncertain. As these events, which relate to the redemption of sinners, if they had not been decreed, must have been uncertain; so if God has formed no purpose respecting the salvation of immortal souls, then their salvation is in a state of total uncertainty. Rather,

4. It is certain that none would be saved, unless God had decreed that a part of mankind should be saved. The salvation of sinners

must be, in its origin and execution, the work of Jehovah. Neither men nor angels, could ever have imagined, unless they were informed of God, that there could be an atonement for sin; so that God could forgive and save sinners who deserve his wrath, and whom he threatens with eternal death. The possibility of an atonement for sin was hidden in the divine mind, until God was pleased to reveal the great mystery of godliness, "*God manifest in the flesh.*" This mystery, when revealed, astonished the angels, and will astonish, not only the angels, but men and devils through eternity. But God never would have provided an atonement for sin, unless he had designed to do it. And if the Lord Jesus Christ had not died on the cross, the whole human race must have perished in their sins. But though Christ has died, and made an atonement for the sins of the world, there is no reason to hope that one sinner will be saved, unless God has decreed that some sinners shall come to Jesus and accept salvation. For every sinner naturally refuses to come to him for eternal life. Although a Saviour be given, and salvation be offered to sinners, it depends entirely upon the sovereign pleasure of God, whether sinners be made willing to be saved. There is then no more reason to hope that one sinner will be saved, than there is reason to believe, that God has decreed to save a certain part of mankind. If God has formed no such purpose, it is certain that all mankind must be lost. But,

5. There is reason to hope that God has determined that some sinners shall be saved, from his doing what was necessary that salvation might be offered to sinners. God says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The design of the divine threatenings to sinners, must have been answered either in the eternal perdition of every sinner; or in the death of a Mediator. To the church at Corinth, the apostle says, "For I have delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." The death of the Lord Jesus Christ must have been designed to effect some great and fixed purpose. In the first sermon that was preached after Christ arose from the dead, it was said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Again, the disciples said unto God in a solemn prayer, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." It was the counsel of God, that his beloved Son should die upon the cross. "God so loved the world that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Since God has done what was necessary that sinners might be saved, there is reason to hope that he has decreed that some part of the human race shall believe and enjoy eternal life, through the death of Jesus Christ.

6. To a part of mankind God causes salvation to be offered. Salvation was offered to sinners in the days of the patriarchs. The great doctrines of the gospel were taught by the shadowy ordinances of the Jewish dispensation. By the prophets, Christ calls unto all the ends of the earth, to look unto him and be saved. When he had arisen from the dead, he commanded his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. By the apostles, the gospel was soon preached unto the Jews and Gentiles. Since the days of the apostles, God has preserved his church, and in his word, and by his ministers, he has offered eternal life to multitudes of sinners. At the present day, God is causing a very extensive publication of the gospel. To vast numbers of sinners in America and Europe, in Asia and Africa, the gospel is preached every Lord's-day. These offers of life to immortal souls, are made at the expense of great exertions and sacrifices. In causing salvation to be so offered to sinners, God effects some important design. And no doubt he intends that many persons to whom he sends the word of life, shall hear and be blessed for ever.

7. God uses the best means to induce those persons to whom he offers salvation, to repent and believe the gospel. God declares to sinners their sin and guilt. And he declares that if they refuse his offered mercy, they must suffer the endless damnation of hell. He clearly states the immense value of salvation. By addressing their understandings, their consciences and their hearts, God urges sinners to flee from future wrath, and to accept eternal life. By using such means with sinners, some important purpose is effected. God says, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Though to many Christ be preached a savor of death unto death; yet wherever God proclaims the gospel, there is reason to believe that he has decreed it shall be to some persons, a savor of life unto life.

8. God causes the ministry of the gospel to effect the conviction and the conversion of many sinners. Though men are slow of heart to believe what God has spoken, yet sometimes they are caused to believe and tremble. They are caused to believe that he is holy, just and good in condemning sinners to endless perdition. They are caused to believe that God is

in earnest when he threatens "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, unto every soul of man that doeth evil." They are caused to see that they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. They are caused to see their need of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. They are caused to see that a forgiveness of their sins, and eternal life are freely offered to sinners in the gospel. They are caused to see that they hate the holy Saviour, and that they are unwilling to be saved. They are also caused to see that unless God, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and who hardeneth whom he will, change their hearts by his sovereign power, for the glory of his great and holy name, they shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God often makes his word "like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." God often causes "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," to be "quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." By the power of his word, he calls sinners from their native darkness into his marvellous light. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is certain that unless the Holy Spirit, by his almighty power, attend the

ministry of the gospel, it will neither convert, nor convince, nor awaken sinners. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The Holy Spirit, by the apostle asks, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." It is God who causes sinners to repent and believe the gospel. But why is it that God causes some sinners to repent and believe the gospel, while others remain in darkness and death, unless it be, as it is written, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth?"

9. God will save a very great part of the human race. After mentioning what numbers were sealed of the tribes of Israel, John says—"I beheld and lo a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.—And one of the elders answered saying unto me, What are these who are arrayed in white robes: and whence come they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he

said these are they who come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat; for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." It is evident that vast multitudes of sinners will be saved. For of the heavenly city it is said, "The nations of them who are saved, shall walk in the light of it." To many redeemed sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ will say at the judgment of the great day—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." As it is certain many will be saved, so it is certain that their salvation is wholly of God. The Holy Spirit says to the faithful in Christ Jesus, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them." Now it seems inconsistent to admit that God saves those persons who are saved, and yet to deny that he decreed their salvation. For if God saves a part of mankind,

and yet did not purpose to do it, he has without design effected the greatest of all his works. To suppose that God does what he did not design and decree to do, as a very pious minister has declared, "is to represent the Almighty as inferior to our common artists on earth." If it were possible for a rational being to act without design, in such actions he would be destitute of goodness and of wisdom. Were a man so to act, he would be accounted a fool. Since a certain part of mankind will be saved, it is evident that God is not the cause of their salvation, or that he has done what he did not design to do, or that he decreed that they should be saved. But who can doubt whether God saves his redeemed people, or whether he designed their salvation? There are then as good reasons for believing that God decreed what number and what persons shall be saved, as there are for believing that any sinners will be saved.

10. God always knew what number and what persons would be saved. It is written, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." When Paul was at Corinth, "The Lord spake unto him in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. For I have much people in this city." As God knew who would repent and believe, at Corinth, he commanded the apostle to stay there and preach the gospel. And as God is omnis-

cient, he foreknows whatsoever comes to pass. But can what is uncertain be known? And is not every thing, which is not determined, wholly uncertain? To suppose God knows, who will be saved, and yet that he has not decreed who shall be saved, implies that what is uncertain may be certainly known. If sinners have a self-determining power, if they can, independently of divine efficiency, repent, or not repent; believe, or not believe; then it is uncertain what they may do, and their conduct cannot be foreknown. We are told by the Holy Spirit, that "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." But if sinners act, independently of divine influence in their salvation, then their salvation is not after the counsel of the divine will; but it is according to the independent self determinations of their own wills. And whether any thing will ever determine their self-determining power, or whether their self-determining power will ever determine any thing, can never be determined. If God has not decreed, who shall be saved, he could not foreknow who would be saved. And then the most important of all events must have been unknown to God. And if God does not foreknow the most important of all events, what reason is there for believing that he knows any thing? A denial of the divine decreees respecting the salvation of immortal souls, denies the essential attributes of Jehovah. It denies the foundation of the divine predictions. It contradicts the divine declara-

tions. It also rejects the plainest conclusions of reason and common sense. We may therefore, with as much reason, plunge ourselves into the gloomy and perplexing darkness of total scepticism, as we can deny that God has decreed what number of the human race, and what persons shall be saved.

Finally, Let us consider what the Holy Spirit has said on this very important subject.—On a subject of such importance, there is reason to believe, that the holy scriptures afford very plain and decisive instruction. Has God, in his true and faithful word, ever said that he has not decreed who shall be saved? Has he denied the doctrine of election? The Psalmist says, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." By Isaiah it is said, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."—The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Again he said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." He also said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and

him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." And again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." In his prayer he says, "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." When the apostle preached at Antioch, the Jews "were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Then Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles, and preached the gospel. And of the Gentiles it is said, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." To the saints at Rome the apostle writes, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Again he says, "Even so then, at this present

time, also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." To the faithful in Christ Jesus, it is written, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. In whom also, we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." AMEN.

SERMON VI.

JOHN VI. 37.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

IN the preceding discourse upon these words, it has been shewn that God has decreed that a certain part of mankind shall be saved. It is now proposed,

II. To enquire, whether God has decreed that the other part of mankind shall be destroyed.

Here it may be well,

1. To consider what God has said on this subject in the holy scriptures, God said to Pharaoh,—"For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people: that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand that I may smite thee, and thy people with pestilence: and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power;

and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." When Eli reproved his sons for their shameful wickedness it is said, "Notwithstanding they hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." God says by the Psalmist, "When the wicked spring as grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." Again it is written, "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea even the wicked for the day of evil." By Isaiah God says, "But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little, that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." Of the Lord Jesus Christ it is written, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." Again Jesus said, "For judgment I am come into this world; that they who see not might see; and that they who see might be made blind."—Again it is written, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias had said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." To the saints at Rome the apostle writes, "For the scripture

saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What, if God to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" To Timothy it is written, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver; but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor."—Jude says to the saints, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained unto this condemnation." Peter says to his Christian brethren, "Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious: but unto them who be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." Such is the testimony of the living and true God, respecting his purpose to destroy all those persons who were not given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. God always knew what persons would be destroyed.

God is omniscient, or he is an imperfect being. If God be omniscient, from eternity he

foreknew whatsoever comes to pass. A denial of the divine prescience of all things, denies the essential perfections of the living and true God, and throws us into the abyss of Atheism. But if God foreknows all things, he knows from eternity what number, and what persons would be destroyed. God foretold the destruction of Pharaoh, and of Judas, and other reprobates. Will any pretend that God did not foreknow how many of those millions of the human race, who have already died, would be lost? Will any pretend that God does not know how many of the millions, who are now living, will be lost? Does not God also know what number, and what persons of those, who shall yet be born, will live and die in their sins, and perish without remedy? Yet what is uncertain cannot be known. Nor can any thing, which is not decreed, be certain. The divine decree respecting the destruction of sinners, is as evident as the divine foreknowledge of their destruction. And the divine foreknowledge of their destruction is as evident as the omniscience of Jehovah. And the divine omniscience is as evident as the divine existence. Shall we then become Atheists? Or shall we believe that God declares "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure?" We have as good reasons for denying the perfections, and the very existence of Jehovah, as for denying that he has decreed the destruction of a part of the human

race. For God must have foreknown what number and what persons would be destroyed.

3. It is certain that a part of the human race will be punished with endless destruction. It is written, "The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of his cup." Again, "Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." And again, "Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake: some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The final Judge hath said, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Again, "Wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: It had been good for that man if he had never been born." Unto the church of the Thessalonians the apostle writes, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And it is said of the wicked, "They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all

might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Peter says of Paul's writings, "In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Jude says, "Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The Holy Spirit says by John, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." It is evident from the declarations of the Holy Spirit, that a part of the human race, will be punished with endless destruction. And what reason can be given for believing that God did not decree that they should be destroyed? Has God formed no purpose respecting his rational creatures? Does he destroy immortal souls without designing their destruction?

4. Many of mankind have already been destroyed.

Before the flood, "The Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air." But it is said, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Again it is written, "The sun was risen upon the earth, when Lot entered into

Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." As God had foretold, he destroyed Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. "The Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them." And it is said, "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day, out of the hand of the Egyptians." God promised to give the land of Canaan to the posterity of Abraham. But when he made this promise to Abraham, he said, "the iniquity of the Amorites, is not yet full." In the days of Joshua the Amorites were destroyed, and their land was given to Israel. But when the city of Jericho was destroyed, Rahab was saved. Christ said to the Jews, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." In writing to the church of the Thessalonians, the apostle says of the Jews, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." Now in the account of the destruction of the wicked by the flood, and of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone from heaven, and of the Canaanites by the sword of Joshua, and of the Jews by the

Romans, it is said they were punished for their wickedness, and destroyed because they had completed the measure of their sins. It is also said, that God showed great favor to Noah and his family, to Lot, who was removed from Sodom, to the children of Israel at the Red Sea, to Rahab, who was saved when Jericho was spoiled, and to the saints who escaped from Jerusalem when that city was destroyed. Yet it is pretended that they who are not converted before they die, are converted at death, and then received into heaven. If it be so, then the wicked at the flood, in Sodom, at the Red Sea, in Canaan, and in Jerusalem, when slain by the sword of divine vengeance according to the scriptures; were converted and raised to heavenly joy and glory. And if they were then converted and made blessed and glorious in heaven, more favor was shewn to the wicked whom God says he destroyed, than to the righteous who found grace in his sight. If then, we believe God rather than man, we must believe that a great part of the human race have already been destroyed by the holy wrath of the Almighty. Did God destroy these souls without designing to do it? Or did he design that they should be destroyed? And when does God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," form his purposes?

5. Under the means of salvation many persons are fitted to destruction. The present life is designed for a state of trial. Human characters in this state are forming with amazing

rapidity. The means, which God uses for the instruction of sinners while they are on probation, have a powerful effect upon their minds; and if they do not soften, they rapidly harden their hearts. What multitudes, to whom salvation was offered, and the kingdom of heaven brought near, have been fitted for damnation, and have fallen into hell, though they were taught, were warned, were intreated, and were commanded to turn to the strong hold, while prisoners of hope! Is it not evident also that many persons, at the present day, who are favored with the gospel of the blessed God, choose darkness rather than light, and death rather than life? God may renew such persons as have a long time rejected his counsel and despised his reproof. But from what has yet been done it is certain, that there are many, who despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. But after their hardness and impenitent hearts, they are treasuring to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. *At this present time*, also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace, but *the rest are blinded.* "According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day." To the Christian Hebrews the apostle writes, "For the earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs

meet for them, by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." To the saints at Corinth he says, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life." Again he says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Is it not evident from these plain declarations of the Holy Spirit, that many persons to whom the gospel is preached remain in total darkness, and are fitted for destruction? Does not God intend they shall be destroyed? Is he not enduring these vessels of wrath with much long-suffering, that he may shew his wrath, and make his power known? As he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, why is he fitting immortal souls for eternal death, if he has not decreed their destruction?

6. To a great part of mankind the means of salvation are not afforded. Millions of the human race, have never heard the Saviour's name, nor once been favored with the offer of life. Many have lived and died in great uncertainty respecting the future existence. Many have never been taught the being and perfections of Jehovah. Nor have they been taught

what he requires of his rational creatures, or what he threatens to inflict upon sinners. They have not been taught their own character, nor the design of their present existence. Millions and millions of mankind have been involved in total darkness, respecting divine and eternal realities, and a greater part of the people, who are now on the earth, are involved in such darkness. But multitudes have been not merely ignorant of the truth; for they have been oppressed by the grossest errors and delusions. They have been enslaved by the father of lies, in the most cruel bondage. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Why has God left such multitudes in such gloomy and destructive darkness? Why has he suffered the destroyer so to prevail, if he had designs of mercy towards those millions, who have lived and died without the light of salvation? Is there not reason to believe that God has designed the destruction of every person to whom the word of this salvation is not sent? For,

7. None are saved without the appointed means of salvation. Some persons imagine that many may be saved without hearing the word of life. But on this subject we can obtain no knowledge but what the word of God affords. It is believed that in the holy scriptures there is not a single text, which gives the least hint that one person is ever saved without the appointed means of salvation. But there are many texts which plainly prove that they who

are not favored with the means of salvation, do perish in their sins. It is written, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The Holy Spirit says by the Psalmist, "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name." Again by Jeremiah, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." Again, it is written, "Where there is no vision the people perish." Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." To the saints at Rome it is written, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" And to the saints at Corinth, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." To the saints of Ephesus, "Remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision, by that which is called circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." John says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world

lieth in wickedness." The Lord Jesus Christ declares, "He that believeth not shall be damned." And the Holy Spirit by the apostle, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* If God affords the appoint-

* "Though the use of means in the case of the unregenerate is not infallibly connected with salvation, yet none may hope for salvation in the neglect of them. Faith cometh by hearing. It does not appear from scripture that any obtain salvation without the intervention, or use of the appointed means of grace. The case of such children, of believing parents, as having been sincerely dedicated to God in baptism, die in their infancy; though there is reason to hope they are saved, is not an exception. For though such are themselves incapable of using means, yet means are used for them in their dedication according to God's appointment, so that the promise of God embraces them. Gen. xvii. 7. I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee. Acts ii. 39. The promise is unto you and to your children. Matt. xix. 14. Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Nor does it appear that such of the Heathens, Jews or Mahometans, who live and die ignorant of the gospel, are an exception. God indeed is no respecter of persons, and in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. Still it must be the only living and true God whom they fear, and the righteousness wrought ought by them, must be the fruit and evidence of faith. For no man, according to the scriptures, can be justified except through the righteousness of Christ, nor through that righteousness, except he be interested in it, nor can he be interested in it, except he be united to Christ by faith, nor can he have faith, except by hearing, nor can he hear, except the word be sent him. Indeed all who from among the Gentiles are turned to God, of whom the scriptures give an account, are begotten again to a lively hope by the word of truth. Rom. x. 14, 15, 17. Prov. xxix. 18. Where there is no vision the people perish; but he that keepeth the law happy is he."

Summary of Christian doctrine and practice by the Trustee of the Missionary Society of Connecticut.

ted means of salvation to every person who is saved, it is certain that he has not designed to save any person to whom the means of salvation are not afforded. But if he has not designed their salvation, he has designed their destruction. For,

8. The destruction of immortal souls is of too great importance to be left in uncertainty.

God has given his well beloved Son to die that sinners might be saved. God has caused more to be done, and to be suffered, to prevent the destruction of immortal souls, than can ever be done or suffered by all his rational creatures. Can it then be supposed that he is willing it should be wholly uncertain what number and what persons shall be saved from the pains of endless death? Is he willing it should be uncertain whether ten, or ten thousand, or ten millions suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? What must be thought of a being, who has given to a vast multitude of rational creatures an eternal existence, and yet is willing it should be uncertain whether they be holy and happy, or sinful and accursed for ever? But if God has formed no decrees respecting the eternal character and condition of men, the number of the lost, must have been uncertain. And if God whose tender mercies are over all his works, had not known whether ten, or ten millions of his rational creatures were to be for ever sinful and accursed, what must have been his feelings, when he was bringing those creatures into existence? What must be his feelings, while they

are in this state of severe and decisive trial? If God has formed no decrees respecting the destruction of immortal souls, thousands and millions, whom it would be best to save, all things being considered, may perish without remedy. But was it ever uncertain whether Pharaoh whom God declares he meant to destroy, and to fit for destruction, would be lost? Was it ever uncertain whether Judas, whom Christ calls the son of perdition, would be lost? Is it now uncertain, what number and what persons, will be on the left hand of the Lord Jesus Christ at the final judgment? Is it now uncertain what number, and what persons will be cast into hell fire; where shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Is it uncertain what number and what persons will be vessels of wrath, and be fitted for that endless destruction, by which God will shew his wrath, and make his power known? But if God has formed no decrees respecting the future characters and conditions of those persons who shall be lost, it is wholly uncertain what number and what persons will be damned. And if it be so, the most important and interesting of all events, is in total uncertainty. If such momentous concerns are left in uncertainty, what is certain? On what can we rest? To whom can we look? Alas, Jehovah, who has been the hope and joy, the rest and refuge, the glory and salvation of his people in all ages, is unworthy of their love, if he has so little compas-

sion and benevolence for his rational creatures, that he is willing it should be wholly uncertain whether they shall be happy or tormented, whether they shall be holy or sinful, whether they shall bless or blaspheme his great and holy name for ever.

9. God cannot be indifferent respecting the endless perdition of immortal souls. The Psalmist says unto God, "Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth." Jeremiah says of God, "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Isaiah says, "In all their affliction he was afflicted." God says by Ezekiel, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." Jesus says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Again he said, "I say unto you that for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account in the day of judgment." Are such the views, and the feelings, and the conduct of of Jehovah; and yet is he indifferent respecting the eternal character and condition of his rational creatures? Does he number the very hairs of our heads, and has he not fixed the number of the vessels of mercy, and of the vessels of wrath? Will he call us to an account for every idle word we speak, and does he not care what number and what persons shall blaspheme his great and holy name for

ever? If God has any regard to any thing, except his own character and happiness, he has a regard to the life of immortal souls: or rather, if he has no regard to the life of immortal souls, he has no regard to his own character and happiness. But as God is love, and as he is full of mercy and compassion; as he possesses the deepest and strongest sensibility, he is affected by every event which exists.—And he has shown, in the most affecting and amazing manner, his lively concern for immortal souls. And has he formed no purposes respecting the eternal character and condition of his rational creatures?

10. By the destruction of immortal souls, very important and desirable purposes are effected.

Since a part of the human race will be destroyed, if it be not best that they should perish; God is either unable or unwilling to effect what is best. Unless then we deny the essential perfections of Jehovah, we must admit that it is best that a certain part of our fellow creatures should be for ever sinful and miserable. God has informed us in the holy scriptures why he destroys a part of the human race. He said to Pharaoh—"In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." God said to Moses, "I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them; and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh and upon all

his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsmen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." When God foretold by Ezekiel the fearful desolation that he designed to bring upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he said; "when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord." When God, by the same prophet denounced the destruction of the Ammonites, and Moabites, of the Edomites, and Philistines, he said—"and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them." When God denounced his vengeance against other nations, he very often repeated the same declaration; saying, "And they shall know that I am the Lord." By Hosea it is said, "Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth." Respecting the destruction of the wicked, the apostle enquires, "What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" By the destruction of his enemies, God manifests his glorious perfections in the most powerful and glorious manner. By their destruction he spreads the sweet and pleasant light of truth through the universe. The full and bright view of the divine perfections, which will be given through the endless perdition of the reprobate, will throw the bitterest anguish into the hearts of the wicked. But the same view of the divine glory will fill the hearts

of the righteous with the purest love, and the liveliest joy, and their mouths with the sweetest songs of praise. While the smoke of the torment of the damned shall ascend for ever and ever, the righteous will say, "Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Though we shall never fully perceive all the benefits, which will arise from the endless punishment of sinners; yet we may be assured, that God will effect by their destruction the wisest and best purposes. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He is the rock: his work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment." Since then it is best that a part of the human race should be vessels of wrath, and fitted to destruction; why should not God decree that they should be destroyed, and that they should be fitted for the endless damnation of hell?

Finally, If God has decreed what is wisest and best; if he be not indifferent respecting the eternal character and condition of his rational creatures; if he be unwilling that the number and the persons who perish should be uncertain; if none are saved without the appointed means of salvation, and if to a great part of the human race, these means are not afforded; if God acts according to the counsel of his own will, when by the ministry of the gospel he fits sinners for destruction; if he has done what he designed to do in destroying multitudes of immortal souls; if when he shall inflict endless punishment on many of the human

race, he will act according to his sovereign and holy pleasure; if he foreknows what number and what persons will suffer the pains of eternal death; and if he, who cannot lie, has in his blessed word declared the truth: then God has decreed that a certain part of mankind shall be destroyed.

SERMON VII.

JOHN VI. 37.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

In the preceding discourses upon these words, it has been proved that God has decreed that only a certain part of mankind shall be saved. In the present discourse it is proposed,

III. To enquire why God has decreed that a certain part of the human race shall be saved; and that the other part shall be destroyed. To this enquiry it may be answered,

1. It is not because those persons, whom he has decreed to save, are more worthy of salvation than those who are lost.—No one of mankind is worthy of the least favor he ever enjoys. Jacob said unto God, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." The rich man in the torments of hell, begged a drop of water as a favor, which he did not de-

serve. Nor has one of the human race, on account of his own merit, a better claim upon God for the least favor, than had the rich man for a drop of water to cool his tongue. It is not because mankind were worthy of the Saviour, that God gave his Son to die on the cross. Nor has God decreed the salvation of the elect, because they deserve to be saved; or are more worthy of salvation than those persons who shall be lost. Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus the Publican, the thief on the cross, the Jews who were converted on the day of Pentecost, Saul the persecutor and blasphemer, were not chosen to salvation because they were more worthy than others. For they were the chief of sinners. The apostle says, "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." As the divine decrees respecting the salvation of the elect, are not founded on their desert, it is evident that they are not saved because they are more worthy of salvation than the non-elect. Nor,

2. Has God decreed to save only a certain part of mankind because they, who are lost, are more deserving of destruction than those persons who are saved. Though some of the human race are more sinful and more guilty than others, yet every sinner deserves, and will for ever deserve to suffer the curse of the law, which is eternal death. The damned are pun-

ished according to their sin and guilt. But the redeemed are saved through the unsearchable riches of divine grace in Jesus Christ. God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion. He does not bestow salvation upon any sinner, because his sin and guilt are small. Nor does he leave any sinner to perish, merely because his sin and guilt are great. He gives repentance and faith to sinners according to his own gracious purposes. There is reason to believe that some of the greatest sinners will be saved, and that some of the least sinners will be lost. As the elect have broken the law of God, they deserve its curse. Although they be forgiven and be raised to a state of endless joy and glory; yet they, as well as the non-elect, will for ever deserve to be punished with the endless torments of hell. It is not then because the damned are more guilty than those persons who are saved, that God has decreed to save only a certain part of the human race. Nor,

3. Is it because the atonement is not sufficient for the salvation of all mankind. The atonement renders it consistent for God to offer forgiveness to sinners. All who accept the offer are freely pardoned and saved. Though sinners naturally reject the salvation of the gospel, yet God may apply to whomsoever he pleases the benefits of the atoning sacrifice. If God were pleased to cause all men to accept the salvation of the gospel, the atonement lays a sufficient foundation for their salvation. It is

plainly declared in the holy scriptures that Christ has died for all men; and that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Wherever the gospel is preached, its calls and offers are addressed to sinners without any distinction, or exception. And they, who perish under the light of the gospel, are guilty of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ and his great salvation. If the atonement be sufficient for the pardon of one sin, and the salvation of one sinner, it is sufficient for the pardon of all the sins of mankind, and for their eternal salvation, if God were pleased to apply the benefits of the atonement to the whole world. For an atonement, that should be less than what Christ has made by his death on the cross, would not be sufficient for the salvation of one sinner. And a greater atonement could not be made. The atonement is as sufficient, if it were applied, for the salvation of all the sinners of the human race, as it is for the salvation of one sinner. Therefore it is not, because the atonement is insufficient for the salvation of all men, that God has decreed to save only a certain part of mankind. Nor,

4. Is it because God has not sufficient power to save as many sinners as it is best to save. If God were able to save only a part of mankind, his want of power would be a good reason for decreeing that only a part should be saved. For it would be best to decree to do nothing, but what he could perform. But God, who created all things of nothing by the word

of his power, and who governs all his creatures and all their actions, is able to do whatever he pleases. Jeremiah says unto God, "Behold, thou hast made the heavens and the earth, by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." God himself says, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there any thing too hard for me?" Job says of God, "He is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." God is able to send the gospel to the ends of the earth, and to cause every human creature to hear, and to accept the glad tidings of salvation. It would be no more difficult for God to renew and sanctify those persons, who are lost, than it is to renew and sanctify those persons who are saved. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will." As God was able to change the hearts of three thousand in one day, he is able to change the hearts of all mankind. He worketh in all men both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. With God nothing is impossible. Want of power then is not the reason why God has decreed to save only a certain part of the human race. Nor,

5. Is it because he has not wisdom sufficient to perceive how to dispose of immortal souls in the best manner. God clearly and fully perceives the end from the beginning. He has sufficient wisdom to form the best purposes, and

to devise and employ the best means for effecting his designs. He was able to see what number of rational creatures it was best to bring into existence. He was able also to see what character, and what condition it was best to appoint and ordain, for every rational being. God was never perplexed, or embarrassed, respecting the number and the persons, whom he should save, nor respecting the number and the persons, whom he should destroy. He was always able to see how many vessels of wrath, and how many vessels of mercy he should need to answer his desires and his designs. He always had sufficient wisdom to determine whom he should appoint unto destruction, and whom he should appoint unto salvation. His decrees then respecting the salvation of one part of the human race, and the destruction of the other part, do not arise from want of wisdom. For the wisdom of God always enabled him to see how to dispose of immortal souls in the best manner. Nor,

6. Is it because God has not goodness sufficient to choose, in the best manner, the eternal destination of human beings. "God is love." He always desires and chooses what is best. As his wisdom enables him clearly to see what number and what persons it is best to save, and what number and what persons it is best to destroy; so his infinite and immutable benevolence dispose him to desire, to choose, and to decree what is best, all things being considered, respecting the eternal charac-

ter and condition of every human being. God then has not decreed that one part of the human race shall be saved, and that the other part shall be destroyed, because he has not sufficient goodness to induce him to form the best purposes respecting the eternal destination of immortal souls. From the considerations which have been mentioned respecting the present enquiry, we are bound to believe that God has decreed to save one part of mankind, and to destroy the other part, because it is best, all things being considered, that one part of mankind should be saved, and that the other part should be destroyed.—That this conclusion may be more evident, several other considerations may now be suggested.

1. God desires and chooses what is best.—That God desires and chooses the greatest good, which can exist, is as evident as it is that he is a benevolent being. It is certainly desirable that the greatest good, which can exist, should be produced. As God is infinite and immutable in goodness, from his own nature, he desires and chooses, that what is best, all things being considered, should exist. To say that God does not know what is best, is to impeach his natural perfection. To say that he does not desire what is best, is to impeach his moral rectitude. There are then as good reasons to believe that God desires and chooses the greatest good that can exist, as to believe that he is a being of infinite perfection.

2. The happiness of God depends upon his

effecting what he desires and chooses. What God desires and chooses, he desires and chooses with all his heart and soul, with all his mind and strength. He ever perceives what he ought to desire, and to choose respecting every creature, and every event. And his desire, and his choice respecting every thing is wisest and best. In proportion to the strength of the divine desires, and the wisdom and rectitude of the divine choice, must be the pleasure of God in gratifying his desires, and his satisfaction in effecting his chosen purposes. But should God, in one instance, fail of effecting what he desires and chooses, he would be disappointed. And his infelicity, from such a disappointment, would be as great as the ardor of his desires, and the wisdom and rectitude of his choice. If then, God should, in one instane, fail of "working all things after the counsel of his own will," darkness and death would involve and destroy the universe. "But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places." He declares, "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God causes every creature, every action, every volition, every desire, and every event to be what he pleases and what he decrees. And his happiness depends upon his doing, in every instance, according to his will,

in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

3. By effecting what he desires and chooses, God gives the greatest glory to his great and holy name. The eternal and essental perfections of God can receive no addition. Therefore the inherent and immutable glory of the name of Jehovah can never be increased. Goodness is the glory of the divine name.—And God glorifies his name by displaying his goodness. Whenever he does good, he displays his goodness and glorifies his name. By effecting the greatest good, which can exist, God will give his name the greatest glory that can be given. Created good must be according to the extent of knowledge, holiness and happiness, which exist in created beings. God then will cause the greatest extent of knowledge, holiness and happiness, which can be imparted from the eternal fountain of light, love and joy. By causing the greatest extent of knowledge, holiness and happiness, which can exist in creatures, God will manifest his perfections in the most glorious manner. And by manifesting his perfections in such a manner, God will give the greatest glory to his great and holy name.—But if God does not design and effect what is best, then he might have done better than what he will now do. And if he might have done better than what he will now do, his perfections will not be displayed in the most glorious manner. And if his perfections be not displayed in the most glorious manner, he

might have given greater glory to his great and holy name, than will now be given. But God is worthy of the greatest glory, which can be given him. And he ought to glorify his great name in the most glorious manner. But if he does not decree and effect what is best, he will not, in the fullest and clearest manner, display his great and holy character. Nor will he give the greatest glory to his great and holy name. But by effecting what is best, which implies the greatest extent of created knowledge, holiness and happiness, according to his eternal purpose, God will give the fullest and clearest manifestation of his glorious perfections, and he will also give the greatest glory to his great and holy name.

4. By beholding the glory of God, holy creatures will grow in divine knowledge. Thro' the imperfection of creatures, the character of God can be known only from his word and from his works. To give his rational creatures a knowledge of his perfections, it was necessary that God should display his glory before their eyes. And the more clearly and fully they behold the divine glory, the greater will be their knowledge of the divine perfections. As God can never be fully known by finite minds, his creatures may for ever advance in divine knowledge, if he be pleased to unveil his glory to their view. If God desires, and if he has decreed to give to his rational creatures the fullest and clearest exhibition of his glory, then they will experience the greatest extent of di-

vine knowledge which can exist in created minds. Such a knowledge to holy creatures is eternal life. The Lord Jesus Christ says unto the Father, "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Unto the church at Corinth the apostle writes, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Through Jesus Christ, God has purposed to give to every one of his rational creatures the fullest and clearest knowledge of his great and holy and dreadful name. Though such a view of God will pain and torture his enemies, it is what all his friends most ardently desire to experience. The more fully and clearly God displays his glory before his rational creatures, the greater will be their knowledge of the divine perfections. And as the divine perfections will ever appear with increasing glory to holy creatures, they will for ever advance in divine knowledge.

5. By beholding the glory of God, holy creatures will grow in divine love. It is by seeing the divine glory, that the evil affections of saints are destroyed, and their holy affections excited and strengthened, until they become perfect, even as their Father, who is in heaven, is perfect. The apostle says to the saints at Corinth, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even

as by the spirit of the Lord." Though the holy angels and the saints in heaven will be perfectly holy, yet their love may be more ardent, and all their holy affections may be greatly increased in their strength and fervor. As their minds shall be enlarged with divine knowledge, their hearts will be enlarged with divine love. The more fully and clearly God manifests his glorious perfections, the more excellent and amiable he will appear to all holy beings; and the greater will be their love of his holy and blessed name. As the perfections of God are infinite, his rational creatures may for ever advance in their knowledge of the divine glory. And as holy creatures love God with all their hearts and souls, with all their minds and strength, while their natural powers shall be increased by divine knowledge, they will for ever advance in divine love. The growth of holy creatures in divine love will be continued and increased through eternity, by beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

6. By beholding the divine glory, holy creatures will grow in divine joy. As holy creatures give God their hearts, he is the object of their supreme delight, as well as the object of their supreme love. From the joy, which Moses derived from seeing the divine character, he earnestly desired to see the glory of God. With the purest and strongest desires he said unto God, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." David plainly intimates that his greatest happiness consisted in beholding the beauty of

the Lord. He says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Again he says, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Nor could he conceive of any higher enjoyment than what would arise from beholding the face of God in heaven. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness. In thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right-hand are pleasures forevermore." The eternal enjoyments of the saints in heaven arise from a sight of the divine glory in Christ Jesus. The Son of God said to the Father, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." The joy of holy creatures will for ever increase with their knowledge, and their love of the glorious perfections of God.

7. It is best that the perfections of God should be manifested in the fullest and clearest manner. For from what has been proved in the preceding observations, it is evident that by such a manifestation of the divine perfections, what God desires and chooses will be accomplished, the divine felicity will be per-

fected and perpetuated, and the divine name will be exalted and glorified. As God is concerned, it is then certainly best that he should give the fullest and clearest manifestation of his eternal perfections. And as holy creatures are concerned, it is as certainly best that such a manifestation of the divine perfections should exist. For it has been proved, in the preceding observations, that the more fully and clearly the divine glory shall be exhibited before the eyes of holy creatures, the greater will be their knowledge, holiness and happiness. As the greatest extent of created excellence is desirable, it is best that the knowledge, holiness and happiness of created beings should be raised to the greatest height. Since such desirable purposes are effected by the manifestation of the glory of God, if a greater good is to be desired and chosen, rather than a less good, then it is best that the perfections of Jehovah should be manifested in the fullest and clearest manner. That God desires and has designed so to manifest his perfections, we are plainly taught in the holy scriptures. It is written, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." God manifests his manifold wisdom, by forming and effecting the wisest and best purposes. And as it is wisest and best, so he has decreed to give

to his rational creatures the fullest and clearest exhibition of his glorious perfections.

8. It is best that whatever is necessary to the most glorious manifestation of the divine perfections should exist. All things being considered, it is best that such means, as are necessary to effect the best purposes, should exist; whatever the means may be in themselves. As it is best that the perfections of God should be manifested in the most glorious manner, it is best that whatever is necessary for this purpose should exist. If God be powerful, then it is best that whatever is necessary to give the fullest and clearest exhibition of his power should exist. If God be just, then it is best that whatever is necessary to give the fullest and clearest exhibition of his justice should exist. If God be gracious, then it is best that whatever is necessary to give the fullest and clearest exhibition of his grace should exist. If God be the sovereign of the universe, then it is best that whatever is necessary to give the fullest and clearest exhibition of his sovereignty should exist. If God could not give the brightest manifestation of his perfections, without creating the beings he has made, then it was best that they should be created. If God could not give the fullest view of his glory, without governing all his creatures and all their actions, according to his eternal purpose, then it is best that he should work all

things after the counsel of his own will. If the existence of sin be necessary to manifest the glory of God in the most glorious manner, then it was best that sin should be caused to exist. If God could not give the most glorious exhibition of his character, unless his beloved Son appeared in the flesh and died on the cross, then it was best that he should so appear and die. If God cannot give the fullest view of his glory, unless there be vessels of wrath, as well as vessels of mercy, then it is best that one part of mankind should be fitted for destruction, as well as the other part for salvation. And if God cannot give the greatest glory to his great and holy name, unless he punish a certain number of the human race in the endless torments of hell, then it is best that a certain number of the human race should be tormented in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, day and night for ever and ever.

9. By decreeing and effecting the salvation of the elect, and the destruction of the non-elect, God does give the fullest and clearest manifestation of his glorious perfections. Since God has decreed that a certain part of mankind shall be saved, and that the other part shall be destroyed, we may be assured that it is wisest and best that there should be vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as well as vessels of mercy prepared unto glory. And the reason of his decrees, respecting the eternal character and condition of human beings, the Holy Spirit has been pleased to teach us in the holy scriptures.

To the faithful in Christ Jesus it is written, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace are ye saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." From these words of the Holy Spirit, it is evident that God saves his chosen people for the purpose of manifesting the riches of his grace in the most glorious manner. Again it is written, "What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy he had afore prepared unto glory?" It appears then that according to the scriptures, God saves the elect, and destroys the non-elect, that he may for ever give to every rational creature, the fullest and clearest exhibition of his divine perfections. For this wise, and holy, and glorious purpose, he decreed, in the counsels of eternity, that a certain part of the human race should be saved, and that the other part of the human race should be destroyed. And by effecting his eternal purpose, respecting the salvation and the destruction of immortal souls, he causes the glory of his great and holy name to appear in the most glorious manner. We may see, then, as plain-

ly as we can see any object, which is placed before the mind, why God has decreed to save only a certain part of mankind, and why he has decreed that the other part of mankind shall be destroyed.

SERMON VIII.

JOHN VI. 37.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

In the preceding discourse it has been proved that God, by decreeing and effecting the salvation of the elect, and the destruction of the reprobate, gives the fullest and clearest manifestations of his glorious perfections. It may be well now,

IV. To enquire what perfections God manifests, by saving one part, and by destroying the other part of the human race.

Here it may be replied,

1. That God, by saving the elect, and by destroying the reprobate, most fully and clearly manifests his power. When God delivers his people from the bondage of Satan, he shows that he not only controls the human heart, but that he can bind the god of this world, and rescue from his hand as many of

his subjects as he chooses to save. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered. For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And all flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob." In writing to his Christian brethren, the apostle says, "that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us, who believe; according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right-hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Through the redemption of his chosen people, God shows his power as fully and clearly as it can be shown, by raising sinful and guilty creatures from the lowest hell to the highest heaven, against the most violent enmity and the most powerful opposition. For earth and hell are armed against God, and oppose every exertion which he makes for the salvation of his people. It is by the main strength of the Almighty, that the elect are rescued from Satan, subdued and prepared for heaven. By fitting his people for the holy and blessed society of heaven, God manifests his power in a very instructing

and glorious manner. And in a manner, that is no less instructing and glorious, he manifests his power by hardening and punishing the reprobate. Though they hate his holy name, he governs their enmity to his own glory. Tho' they hate his decrees, he effects his decrees by their very hatred. Though they desire to flee from his hand, yet he hardens their hearts, and forms their characters according to his holy and sovereign pleasure. Though they labor and strive to obtain happiness, and to avoid misery, yet he fits their souls for the endless torments of hell. Though their enmity against God will for ever continue and increase, and though they will for ever blaspheme his great and dreadful name, yet he will cause their wrath to praise him. As the strength of the reprobate, and the fury of their wrath against God shall increase, with the greater glory will his power be seen in laying upon their guilty heads the weight of his vengeance. But if no persons should be for ever filled with hatred and wrath against God, how could his power appear so great and glorious as it will now be shown upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? When God declares that he will punish the wicked, then it is that he so often repeats that fearful saying, "And they shall know that I am the Lord." Having denounced the destruction of his enemies, God says, "Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I

am the Lord." If by destroying wicked men and wicked nations from the face of the earth, God magnifies his great name, with what glory will his power appear in the great day of his wrath, when he shall show his wrath, and make his power known upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction! By raising the elect to the highest glory of the highest heaven, and by casting the reprobate into the bottomless pit, where they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever, God will manifest the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, in the fullest and clearest manner.

2. By saving the elect and by destroying the reprobate, God most fully and clearly manifests his goodness. Goodness constitutes the moral perfection of God. It is the beauty and glory of the divine character. All the natural perfections of God are under the influence of infinite and immutable benevolence. As God is love in his own nature, all his desires and designs and conduct are the exercise and expression of holy love. The goodness of God decrees and effects whatsoever comes to pass.—Every object and every event, when seen in its proper connections and consequences, manifests the divine glory, which is the divine goodness. The seraphim cried, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Though in all things God is good, and doeth good, and tho' his tender mercies are over all his works; yet he displays his goodness most fully and clearly

in his conduct towards sinful and guilty creatures. When Moses desired to see the glory of God, and God promised to make all his goodness pass before him, God declared his feelings and his conduct towards sinful and guilty creatures, as affording the brightest evidence and the fullest expression of his goodness. "The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." The goodness of God, as it appears in his conduct towards sinful creatures, must be displayed either in their forgiveness, or in their punishment. When God proclaimed his name he mentioned his goodness in punishing, as well as in pardoning sinners. Since an atonement for sin has been made by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, God can be true, just and holy, as well as gracious; although he forgives sinners, whom he hates and who deserve his wrath and to whom he threatens endless woe. But in the forgiveness of sinners, God is moved by his goodness to regard his own character and government and the interests of the universe. It is for the glory of his

name, which is his goodness, that God pardons his chosen people. As there is nothing but sin and guilt in his people, before they are renewed, it is of his sovereign mercy that they are called and forgiven, sanctified and glorified. The redeemed are by nature wholly sinful and very hateful. They are by nature children of wrath, and they will for ever deserve the wrath of God. Yet they receive from God the endless joys and glories of heaven. As these joys and glories will continue and increase for ever, the goodness of God to pardoned sinners will for ever and ever appear with greater beauty and glory. For ever and ever to his redeemed people will Jehovah be giving greater blessings, and be displaying, in a fuller and clearer manner, his benevolence and loving kindness. O can they, "be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge!" They shall indeed be filled with all the fulness of God. And God will make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. In the ages to come he will show the exceeding riches of his grace, in the salvation of the elect, through Christ Jesus. But how can the saints in glory see the greatness of the divine goodness in their salvation, unless they see the sin and the woe from which they are saved? And how can they see the sin and the woe from which they are saved, unless they behold the enmity and [illegible] the anguish and despair

of the damned? If then there were no vessels of wrath, God could not manifest, in the fullest and clearest manner, the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy. But the damnation of the reprobate will cause all rational creatures to see most fully and clearly the goodness of God in the salvation of the elect. Besides, if the character of the reprobate be considered, it will be evident that God is holy, just and good, in punishing such sinful, guilty and hateful creatures. But as God forms their characters, there are good reasons why the reprobate should be for ever sinful, and guilty, and hateful. Though God be good in punishing the reprobate, when they exist; he would not be good in bringing such creatures into existence, unless their existence be necessary to effect the wisest and best purposes. Since God hates sin and misery with all his heart, he would never endure their eternal existence, unless it were best that they should for ever exist. As God creates, hardens and punishes the reprobate, it is evident that his goodness will be more fully and clearly displayed in their destruction, than it could have been in their salvation. The endless existence and punishment of the reprobate, affords the most severe and decisive trial of the divine goodness. How can God, who has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, inflict upon the reprobate the pains of eternal death? How can God, who hates sin with all his heart, cause so great a number of his rational creatures to hate and blaspheme

his holy and blessed name for ever ? It could not be done, unless it were wisest and best. The more God hates what is evil, the greater does his goodness appear in decreeing and effecting the destruction of the reprobate. It is in view of the holy vengeance of Almighty God, upon the vessels of wrath, that the righteous sing the loudest and sweetest alleluias. All holy beings will for ever praise the name of the Lord God, for his goodness in decreeing and effecting the damnation of the reprobate, as well as in decreeing and effecting the salvation of the elect. It is therefore evident that in creating, hardening and punishing the reprobate, God more fully and clearly manifests his eternal, immutable and invincible benevolence, than it could have been manifested, if all mankind had been made holy and happy and glorious for ever.

3. By saving one part and by destroying the other part of the human race, God most fully and clearly manifests his sovereignty. The sovereignty of God implies that he is, in his own nature, perfectly independent, and that every creature and every event is wholly dependent upon him. As God is self-existent, he is independent. As he is independent in his existence and perfections, he is also independent in forming and effecting all his purposes. The motives of the divine decrees, and of the divine conduct, exist in the eternal and immutable perfections of God. The divine sovereignty, therefore, is most glorious. It is infinite good-

ness acting without restraint, and effecting the wisest and best purposes. The divine sovereignty is described, when it is said, that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. His sovereignty, therefore, is manifest in whatever exists. Yet it is most evident and most glorious in those events by which he most fully and clearly manifests his perfections. As he manifests his power and goodness, so he manifests his sovereignty, in the fullest and clearest manner, by the salvation of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked. In the holy scriptures, God often asserts his sovereignty, as it is displayed in his conduct towards mankind. He says, "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." Again he says, "I form light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." Again it is said, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." And again, "Thou, O Lord, art worthy to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." For his own glory, God brings the millions and millions of the human race into existence. In this life, they are placed in a state of probation, and preparation for eternity. In this state, God appoints all their external circumstances, and creates and controls all their internal exercises. In all his conduct towards human be-

ings, in the present life, God is forming their characters for the final judgment, and for the retributions of eternity. And he forms the character of every person according to his holy and sovereign pleasure. By the fiery trials of this trying scene, he softens the hearts of some persons; but the hearts of others he hardens. To some persons he makes the ministry of the gospel a savor of life unto life, and to others, a savor of death unto death. Some he is fitting for endless glory, and others for endless shame. Some he is fitting for the joys of heaven, and others for the sorrows of hell. As God acts according to his good pleasure in forming human characters for eternity, and in appointing to human beings their eternal condition; every one will for ever realize the sovereignty of God, as deeply as he realizes his own character and condition in eternity. To the divine sovereignty, the righteous will ascribe their own salvation, and the destruction of the wicked. And to the divine sovereignty, the wicked will be obliged to ascribe their own destruction, and the salvation of the righteous. Every one of the human race will be made to see that the counsel and the agency of God, were concerned in decreeing and effecting his own character and condition for eternity, as well as the character and condition of every one of his fellow creatures. The difference, which God produces between the elect and the reprobate, will for ever continue and for ever increase. The elect, he will raise to greater

and greater heights of holiness and happiness. The non-elect, he will sink to greater and greater depths of wickedness and misery. The greater the difference which God produces in the character and condition of his rational creatures, the more fully and clearly is his sovereignty displayed. By decreeing and effecting the eternal and ever increasing difference, which will exist between the elect in heaven, and the reprobate in hell, God will for ever manifest to every creature, in the fullest and clearest manner, his holy and glorious sovereignty. It appears then, from what has been said on the present enquiry, that by the salvation of the elect, and the damnation of the reprobate, God will display through eternity, his power, his goodness, and his sovereignty, in their greatest beauty and glory. It is now proposed,

V. To enquire what the elect must do that they may be saved.

1. That they may be saved, it is necessary that the elect exercise repentance towards God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The elect, as they are born into the world, are the enemies of God. They hate his holy character. They hate the divine law. They hate the divine decrees. And they hate the divine conduct. But however they may hate and oppose God, neither his character, nor the law, nor the divine decrees,

nor the divine conduct will ever change. From his own nature, God is the enemy of all his enemies. He desires and designs to destroy every sinner, who does not become his friend. They therefore who are the enemies of God, must repent, or perish. Even if God should not threaten destruction to the wicked, nor inflict any punishment upon his enemies, every sinner would be unhappy. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." It is not merely from the requirements, and the threatenings, and the determinations of God, but it is also from the very nature and relations of moral agents, that the repentance of sinners is necessary to their salvation. And when sinners do truly repent, they hate sin for its exceeding sinfulness. They loathe and abhor themselves for their iniquities. Turning from every sin, they turn unto God with all their hearts. They love his holy character with supreme and ardent affection. They love the divine law. It appears holy, just and good. They see the beauty and glory of divine justice in condemning and punishing transgressors. They are pleased with the wisdom, rectitude, benevolence and sovereignty of the divine decrees. They are delighted with the conduct of God in creating, preserving and governing the universe. The decisions of the final judgment, and the retributions of eternity, fill their hearts with divine joy, and their mouths with songs

of praise. The holy and sovereign agency of God, which extends to every creature, every action, every volition and every event, is most pleasing, comforting, supporting and rejoicing to holy penitents. While they are pleased with the holy and powerful sovereignty of Jehovah, in view of their own moral deformity and defilement, they are displeased with themselves. The true penitent says unto God, "Behold, I am vile, what can I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Such are the views and feelings of every sinner, who exercises repentance towards God. And without this repentance no sinner can be saved. Even the elect, as well as the reprobate, except they repent, must perish.

2. That the elect may be saved, they must exercise faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners naturally hate the Lord Jesus Christ as much as they hate the Father. And they hate the gospel as much as they hate the law. But unless they love Jesus Christ and the gospel of his grace, they cannot be saved. The holy repentance of the elect is not the ground of their salvation from the eternal punishment which is threatened in the law to every sinner. Nor is their future obedience any atonement for their past transgressions. Nor is the eternity and the magnitude of the punishment, which the law threatens to sinners, a sufficient reason for re-

leasing transgressors from the pains of eternal death. Nor does the benevolence and loving kindness of God afford a foundation to hope for the forgiveness and salvation of sinners. "For the wages of sin is death." Every sinner deserves and will for ever deserve the damnation of hell. In punishing sinners, with the pains of hell for ever, God is holy, just and good. Unless, then, an atonement had been made for sin, every one of the human race must for ever have suffered the holy wrath of Almighty God. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is *Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh*, is the only foundation on which God can ever meet and forgive the sinner, and admit him into his presence and favor. "Other foundation can no man lay, than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare his righteousness that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." As the atonement for sin, which has been made through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only foundation of forgiveness; so faith in his blood is the only condition of salvation. The believing sinner

is saved, not for the merit of his faith, but because by faith he receives the Lord Jesus Christ and relies upon his blood, which cleanses from all sin, for acceptance with God. The sinner, who exercises faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, perceives that *he is the true God and eternal life.* He perceives that by his death on the cross, he has made an atonement for sin, so that God is most glorious in saving sinners through Jesus Christ. Beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the hearts of the elect are drawn to the Saviour, and are united to his holy and blessed name through that faith, which worketh by love, purifieth the heart and overcometh the world. In coming unto God through Jesus Christ the believing sinner submits himself, with all his interests, unto the holy, sovereign and gracious disposal of his Creator. He renounces every selfish interest, and engages to love, to obey and to glorify God in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. And by faith in the truth and grace of God in the blessed gospel, believers live to the praise and glory of their divine Redeemer. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The elect by faith in Jesus Christ obtain the forgiveness of their sins, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.—But the final and supreme Judge has declared that he who believeth not, shall be damned.—

It is therefore certain that the elect cannot be saved, unless they exercise faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as repentance towards God.

3. That the elect may be saved they must become perfectly holy.

From his own rational and moral existence, and from his relations to his Creator and to his fellow creatures, every man is bound to love God with all his heart and soul, with all his mind and strength, and his fellow creatures as himself. God enforces the law of nature by the whole weight of his supreme authority, and by threatening endless wrath to every sinner. By the structure of the universe every thing is summoned and engaged to oppose, distress and destroy unholy creatures. While he is unholy, the sinner's own conscience is armed against his peace. It is therefore impossible to devise a way, in which sinners can become happy, without becoming holy. And certainly the glorious gospel of the blessed God can never afford the least allowance to what God hates with all his heart and soul, with all his mind and strength. Though God in the gospel offers to forgive and to save the greatest sinners, yet in the gospel he also manifests, in the greatest degree, his hatred of sin, and his displeasure against sinners. Yet many, who profess to believe and to love the gospel, suppose they are not bound to obey the divine law. But the apostle, although he says, "we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of

the law;" yet demands, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." The gospel not only requires sinners to repent and believe, but it imposes upon every penitent and believing sinner a more powerful obligation to become perfectly holy, than ever was imposed by the law, which threatens to every sinner the pains of eternal death. The Lord Jesus Christ says to his disciples, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." By the apostle, the Holy Spirit often requires Christians to be perfect in holiness. He says by Peter, "As he who hath called you is holy, so, be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy." The gospel, as well as the law, forbids every sin, and requires perfect holiness of every person. No one of the human race can ever enter into heaven, unless he cleanse himself from all the filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. He "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might purify it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish." The apostle says, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." To the saints at Ephesus, he

writes, " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Again he says to Christians, " Abstain from every appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The commands, the promises, the threatenings, and the exhortations which are addressed to Christians in the gospel, conspire to prove that they cannot be saved, unless they become perfectly holy. Perfect holiness is the glory of the salvation, which God bestows upon his people. And no one of the human race can be saved, unless he become holy, as God is holy, and pure, even as Christ is pure.

Having shown what the elect must do that they may be saved, we are now led,

VI. To enquire why it is certain that they will do what is necessary to their salvation. In the text, the Lord Jesus Christ says, " All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." From these words it appears, that it was certain that all the elect would repent and believe on his name. But why is it certain? To this question, it may be answered,

1. That it is not certain, from the native character of the elect. God, who knows the human heart, has truly described it in his word. It is there written, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. What is man, that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water? They are all gone aside. They are together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The Lord Jesus Christ said to sinners, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Again he said, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And again, "They have both seen and hated, both me and my Father. They have hated me without a cause." This description of human depravity is as truly applied to the elect before their hearts are renewed, as to the reprobate. Though they have natural power to do their duty, yet they have no heart to comply with the gospel. They hate the Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious gospel of his grace, with all their hearts. They therefore, constantly refuse to repent of their

sins, to believe on his name, and to walk in his commandments. From the native character of those persons whom God has decreed to save, there is not the least reason to hope that they will ever do what is necessary to their salvation. But it is certain that if they are suffered to act according to their native disposition, they will for ever reject the counsel of God, against themselves, and perish in their sins.

Nor,

2. Is it certain that the elect will be saved from the means which are used for their salvation. All the conduct of God towards the children of men, in this state of trial, is well suited to lead sinners to repentance. The blessings they enjoy, and the afflictions they suffer, ought to awaken their attention and to turn their affections to God. The dispensations of divine Providence, in which God is constantly displaying his glorious perfections before their eyes, should make a deep impression on their minds, and engage their hearts to love, to adore and to glorify his great and holy name. By the instructions of his word and the ministry of the gospel, God beseeches sinners to be reconciled to him. By the enjoyment of his favor in life, of his presence in death, and his approbation at the final judgment, and by the eternal glories of heaven, God urges sinners to repent, to believe and be saved. They are also urged to repent and believe the gospel by the present enmity and anger of God against sinners, by the terrors of death, by the condemnation of the final

judgment, and by the damnation of hell. By these motives God urges and intreats, warns and beseeches sinners to cease to do evil and learn to do well. But against all these motives they shut their eyes, and harden their hearts, and persist in their enmity against God and against the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the obstinate depravity and malignant wickedness of the human heart, that no means nor motives are sufficient to induce sinners to come unto Christ for life. God says to sinners, " I have called and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." Zechariah says of sinners, " They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets." To the saints at Corinth the apostle says, " Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God, that giveth the increase." From what God has said, and from the conduct of sinners, it is most evident that no means, which can be used, are sufficient to lead sinners to repentance. By the very means, which God has appointed for the salvation of his people,

the reprobate are fitted to destruction. By the same means the elect would be fitted for the same destruction, unless God were pleased, by his sovereign power and grace, to change their hearts. Merely from the means, which God uses for the salvation of the elect, there is then no certainty that even one of the number, that he has given to Christ, will ever come to him for life. But,

3. From *the decree of God*, it is certain that the elect will do what is necessary to their salvation. God has not only decreed that they shall be saved, but he has also decreed that they shall repent of their sins, believe on Jesus Christ and become perfectly holy. What he has decreed, he is able and willing to effect. He says unto Christ, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." To his chosen people God says, "A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." To Christians the apostle writes, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."—To the saints at Rome he says, "And we know

that all things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loveth us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." From the eternal purpose of God, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, it is certain that all, whom the Father hath given to Christ, shall come to him. Their

repentance, their faith and their perfection in holiness are secured by the sovereign counsel and the eternal and immutable perfections of Jehovah. All therefore whom the Father hath given to the Lord Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption, and ordained to eternal life, shall repent and believe, and be holy and blessed for ever. It may now,

VII. Be enquired by what means God saves those persons, whom he has chosen unto salvation.

Though no means ever produce any effect without the divine agency, yet God is pleased to appoint and to use means to effect his designs. He has appointed and he employs the ministry of the gospel for the conviction, conversion, instruction, edification and sanctification of his chosen people. Christ appointed and authorised his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He then added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." By the apostle it is written, "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Again he says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have

not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The people of God are called, converted, instructed, edified and sanctified by the ministry of the gospel. Here it may be well to observe,

1. That the ministry of the gospel is well suited to effect the salvation of the elect. The light of truth which shines in the gospel most clearly exhibits the perfections of God, and the glory of the divine law, and the depravity and ill-desert of sinners. It exhibits the character of Jesus Christ, and the foundation which he has laid for the salvation of his people. It also exhibits the powerful and gracious agency of the Holy Spirit, who renews and sanctifies the hearts of the elect. The gospel gives all the instruction and makes all the provision, which is necessary for the salvation of sinners. The light of divine truth, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, does most fully and clearly discover to sinners their sin and guilt, their danger and remedy. When sinners repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel affords that instruction, consolation and edification, which they need while they remain in this state of trial. The perfections, the purposes and the conduct of God, as they are exhibited in the gospel of Jesus

Christ, are suited to make the deepest impressions on the human mind, and to produce in the human heart the purest and liveliest affections. Well might the apostle say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

2. God can cause the ministry of the gospel to effect the salvation of his people. By nature they are the children of Satan. They possess his spirit. They love his character. They delight in his service. As he is the father of lies they choose darkness rather than light. And though the ministry of the gospel is well suited to turn sinners from Satan unto God, yet they resist the truth and grace of God in Jesus Christ. Many of his chosen people for years embrace the most dangerous and pernicious delusions, and practise the most shameful and ruinous iniquities. In many instances they are nearly fitted for final and remediless destruction. Yet God is able to open the blindest eyes, to soften the hardest hearts, and to quicken the deadest souls. He says, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The apostle says, "We do not war after

the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." To Titus he writes, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Whatever may be the depravity of their hearts and however they may be enslaved by Satan, God is able by the sword of the spirit, to subdue the hearts of his people and deliver their souls from the power of the destroyer.

3. God does effect the salvation of his people by the ministry of the gospel. The ancient patriarchs heard of the Saviour and believed on his name. The holy prophets predicted his appearance and proclaimed the glories of his kingdom. By the ministry of the apostles, thousands and thousands were called from their native darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. Since the days of the apostles, by his

ministers, God has been calling, instructing, comforting and sanctifying those persons, whom he had ordained to eternal life. And the gospel will still be preached, until all who were given to Christ shall believe on his name and be prepared to be with him, where he is, to behold his glory. For the Lord Jesus has prayed for his people, saying unto the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, who is the head over all things unto the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." AMEN.

SERMON IX.

JOHN VI. 37.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

HAVING examined the enquiries which these words have suggested to our consideration, it is now proposed to consider several objections, which may be raised against what has been said in the preceding discourses.

I. It may be objected that such sentiments, as have been advanced in these discourses, represent God as an imperfect being. According to these sentiments he has formed such a plan as includes the eternal existence of sin and misery; and without their existence he cannot effect his purposes. And what must we think of such a being, as cannot do without what is most evil and hateful? Surely he is weak, unwise and very imperfect.

To this objection it may be replied,

Sin and misery do exist. They exist among the creatures of God. And their existence will

be eternal. God must either have intended, or opposed their existence; or respecting their existence he must have been indifferent. Will you say he is indifferent respecting the existence of sin and misery? What must we think of a being, who is indifferent respecting the existence of what is most evil and hateful? If God is indifferent respecting the existence of evil, what reason have we to conclude that all rational creatures will not fall into sin and for ever suffer its terrible consequences? What reason have we to suppose that he is concerned respecting any creature, or action, or event? If we believe that he is indifferent respecting the existence of sin and misery, why should we believe that he is concerned in the creation, preservation and government of the universe? If he is not concerned in what most deeply concerns rational creatures, may we not conclude that he has nothing to do with such creatures? And from such a conclusion may we not justly infer, that rational creatures are not bound to have any thing to do with God? If God cares nothing for us, why should we care for him? Shall we then renounce every profession of regard to God, and live by profession, as well as in reality, without God in the world? Or if we wish to maintain religious appearances, the god of this world has his priests and his temples. But if we worship the living and true God, we must worship him in spirit and in truth. We must worship him as the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the universe;

who hath made all things for himself, and who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and bringeth glory to his great and holy name by every creature, every action and every event. His counsel and his agency are concerned in whatever exists. As to every creature and every thing he feels the deepest and liveliest emotions. If we do not love and serve this God, we love and serve his great enemy. Will you then say, that God is indifferent respecting the existence of evil?

But, perhaps, you will say, that God is not indifferent respecting the existence of evil, but opposes its existence; and that it exists against his desires and his designs. What then do you think of that being, who could not prevent what he desired and designed to prevent? Is there a God stronger and wiser than Jehovah? Or will you say that creatures are independent of God in their moral exercises, and that from the very nature of rational and moral agents, they act independently of divine influence, and therefore might have sinned against the desires and designs of God? If so, then there is no security against the universal and eternal sinfulness and misery of rational creatures. If God could not prevent the existence of evil, though he desired and designed to prevent its existence, then he has not the government of the universe in his hands. He is not on the throne. Why should we ascribe to him the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever? Why does he demand our love and our service?

Why should we worship him? From our very nature, as rational and moral agents, we are independent of divine influence. We live and move and have our being without God; after we begin to exist. And so we are now self-existent and independent and unaccountable. Let us then love, and serve, and worship ourselves. For "who is the Almighty that we should serve him?" He is weak, unwise and imperfect, if he opposed, and yet could not prevent the existence of evil.

Will you not, then, O man, believe that the Lord, he is God? Will you not believe what God has declared? "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things. He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." But though God causes evil, it never exists for its own sake. From the darkness, enmity and misery that exist, light and love and joy shall arise and shine. From the existence of evil the power, the wisdom, and the moral perfections of Jehovah will appear in the most beautiful and glorious manner. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen."

II. It may be said that these sentiments are inconsistent with what God has said on these subjects in the holy scriptures. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die,

saith the Lord God; and not that he return from his ways and live? As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Again it is said, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." And again, "The Lord is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." In view of these declarations, can it be supposed that God has decreed that a part of mankind shall not return from their evil ways, but that they shall persist in their sins and die? Has he decreed that some men shall be damned? That they shall perish and never come to repentance? The doctrines, which have been maintained in the preceding discourses, contradict the most plain and solemn declarations of God.

To this objection, it may be replied—God commands all his rational creatures to be holy. He forbids every sin, and he threatens death to every sinner. He requires every person to sanctify the sabbath, and to live a life of faith and prayer. He expresses a most ardent desire, that every one of the human race should now repent and believe, be holy and be saved. Now since such are the will, the desires, the threatenings, the prohibitions and the commandments of God, can it be supposed that God has decreed that any persons shall be un-

holy? But many of the human race are totally sinful and never do what God desires and commands; but always do what he has forbidden. Some things, then, do exist which are contrary to the expressed desires and the preceptive will of God. And if so, may not some persons perish, although God declares that he will have all men to be saved? Why may not some die, although God declares he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth? And if things, which are contrary to what God commands, and to what he desires, may exist, why may not he decree their existence? It is as inconsistent and as unaccountable for any event, which is contrary to the will and to the desires of God to exist, as it is for God to decree its existence. The truth on this subject is very plain, and very easy to be seen. Though many things, which are, *in themselves*, contrary to the will and the desires of God, do exist, yet nothing ever exists, but what God desires and chooses and decrees should exist, *all things being considered.* For he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Though God hates every sin and every pain, yet he has decreed and he causes their existence. And if God may decree and cause the existence of what he hates in itfelf, then he may decree and cause the death of the sinner, though as truly as he lives he has no pleasure in his death. He may decree and effect the damnation of some men, although he will have all men to be saved. And we have no more reason to con-

clude that no persons will be lost, because God will have all men to be saved; then we have to conclude that no persons profane the Lord's day, because God commands every person to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Though God has no pleasure in sin, yet it does exist. Though God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, yet the soul that sinneth it shall die. If sin may exist, there is no reason why God should not decree its existence. And if the sinner may die, why may not God decree his death? It is as wrong for God to cause the existence of what he hates and forbids, as it is for him to decree its existence. God may decree the existence of whatever he may cause to exist. And he does decree and cause whatever exists. If some things exist, which God does not decree and cause, how do we know what things he decrees and causes? And how do we know that he decrees and causes any thing? And if he does not decree, nor cause any thing, then all things exist independently of God. And if all things exist independently of God, what reason is there for believing in the divine existence? We may as well deny the existence of God, as we may deny that his counsel and agency are concerned in decreeing and effecting whatsoever comes to pass. Will you then deny the existence and the perfections of the living and true God? Or will you believe that he has mercy on whom he will and that whom he will he hardeneth? It is certain that he may decree and

cause the death of the wicked, though in their death he has no pleasure. He may and he does decree and effect the damnation of the reprobate, though he will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and though he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. "Unto them, who be disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

III. It may be objected that if what has been said in these discourses be true, God cannot be sincere in the offers which he makes to sinners in the gospel. God says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Again it is said, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But if God has decreed that some persons shall not look unto him for salvation, that they shall not come to Christ for rest, and shall not take the water of life, then he is not sincere in offering the blessings of the gospel to sinners. And who can believe such sentiments, as imply that the living and true God is not sincere in his dealings with his rational creatures? Who shall presume to accuse God of insincerity?

To the objector it may be replied, You do yourself accuse God of insincerity. For you say that he is not sincere in his dealings with his rational creatures. You say that he is not sincere in offering salvation to sinners, if he has decreed and if he effects the damnation of a part of the human race. But does not God freely offer salvation to every sinner to whom the gospel is preached? Yet it is written, "He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Again, "As it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear." And again, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained unto this condemnation." You have before you the offer of life, which God makes to sinners. You have also the account of his hardening and fitting sinners for the destruction to which they were appointed. Now will you say that God does not decree and effect the destruction of sinners? If you do say so, you deny what he has plainly declared. Will you say that if he does decree and effect their destruction, he is not sincere in offering salvation to those persons whom he hardens and destroys? But he does offer salvation to the very persons whom he hardens and destroys. And are you prepared to accuse God of insincerity in offering salvation to the reprobate, whom he appoints and fits to de-

struction? "He that reproacheth God, let him answer it." You cannot truly deny that God hardens the reprobate. How often did God declare that he would harden, and that he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh, that he should not let the children of Israel go from Egypt! Yet he commanded that reprobate to let the children of Israel go, and judged and punished and destroyed him for refusing to obey his commands. Do you say God could not be sincere in commanding Pharaoh to do what he caused him not to do? But God did cause Pharaoh to disobey his own commands. Will you then accuse God of insincerity in the commands he addresses to the reprobate? You may as well accuse God of insincerity in his commands as in his offers to sinners. But why is your eye evil, because God is good? Why do you choose darkness rather than light? Why do you call God a liar, when you are by nature a child of Satan, who is the father of lies? Oh, that you would see and love the truth! For it is most easy and pleasant to be seen. God commands every sinner, whether elect or reprobate, to repent. And every sinner ought to obey every command of God; for his law is holy, just and good. *In itself* God desires the eternal holiness of every rational creature. He is therefore sincere, when in his commands he expresses what he desires, and what every sinner ought to do. As God is sincere in the commands, so it is easy to see that he is sincere in the offers he addresses to the rep-

robate. God is not bound to cause sinners to accept the salvation he offers in the gospel. Nor does the offer imply that he intends it shall be accepted. If God desires the salvation of the reprobate, *in itself*, he may truly express his desires, and may sincerely offer the blessings of the gospel to the non-elect, though all things being considered, he may have decreed their destruction. If God always bestows the blessings he offers when they are accepted; how does it appear that he is not sincere in offering salvation to the reprobate, though he has decreed that they shall not accept the offer? From what God has said, it is certain that if the reprobate will only repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be saved. That they ought to repent and believe on his name is as evident as it is that they ought not to sin. If then the reprobate will only do their duty, they shall be forgiven and saved. God as sincerely desires their salvation, as he desires the salvation of the elect. And the reprobate shall be saved, if they will only comply with the conditions on which the elect obtain salvation. Will they, then, who reject the salvation of the gospel and destroy their own souls, think to accuse God and excuse themselves by saying he is not sincere in offering salvation to the reprobate? O sinners, sinners, sinners! how often would the Lord Jesus Christ have gathered you, even as a hen gethereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not come to him for life! You reject

the gracious counsel of God against yourselves. When you have completed the measure of your sins, his wrath shall come upon you to the uttermost. As God is sincere in offering you salvation, so you shall know that he is sincere in threatening damnation to the vessels of wrath, whom he appoints and fits for destruction.

IV. It may be objected that according to the preceding discourses God is an unjust being. One person he forms into a vessel of mercy, and causes him to be an object of his love and favor for ever. But another person he forms into a vessel of wrath, and causes him to be for ever an object of his hatred and displeasure. To some persons he gives eternal life, though they are as sinful and guilty as others on whom he inflicts the pains of eternal death. It seems then that we are to be treated according to his sovereign pleasure and not according to our virtue and good actions. According to such sentiments God is an unjust and cruel tyrant. Who can believe such sentiments as impeach the justice of God? "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

To this objection it may be answered,

In forming characters God exercises neither justice nor injustice. In the creation of moral agents and in the formation of their characters God exercises his sovereignty. He has a right to create as many rational beings and to give to every one such natural faculties and such a

moral character as he pleases. God always has a right to do as he pleases; for he always pleases to do right. He is as holy, wise and good in creating unholy beings as he is in creating holy beings. That God creates unholy as well as holy beings, is evident from his own words. He says, "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." He also says, "Wo unto him that striveth with his maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, he hath no hands? Wo unto him that saith unto his father, what begettest thou? Or to the woman, what hast thou brought forth?" Again, it is written, "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make me vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Now, "O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Will you accuse God of injustice in creating rational beings, and in forming their moral characters according to his holy and sovereign pleasure?

But if he be not unjust in forming human characters, yet the objector supposes that he is unjust in treating human beings according to the representation which has been given in the preceding discourses. It is objected that God is unjust, if he pardons and saves such persons as are more guilty than others whom he punish-

es. It is believed that, in many instances, God does forgive and save such persons as are more guilty than others, whom he punishes in the endless torments of hell. But God inflicts on those persons whom he punishes nothing but what they deserve to suffer. For every one of the human race has broken the law, which is holy, just and good, and deserves the pains of endless death. For it is written, "The soul, that sinneth, it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Since all mankind deserve the curse of the law, God would not have been unjust, if they had been punished with the endless torments of hell. Nor has any one of the human race, on account of his virtue and good actions, the least claim upon God for the least favor. For, no one has any virtue, or performs any good actions, until he is renewed by the special grace of the Holy Spirit. Who then can demand of God eternal life on the ground of justice? Who can be justified by the deeds of the law? According to the scriptures every one of mankind has sinned and every sinner deserves the curse of the law. And God might have decreed, without the least injustice to any sinner, that the whole world should be lost. Who then shall accuse God of injustice, though in his great mercy in Jesus Christ, he is pleased to save some of the greatest sinners, while he punishes other sinners according to their deserts? Though God in

his sovereign grace in Christ Jesus should renew and forgive, sanctify and glorify the greatest sinner and harden and punish the least sinner in hell for ever, he would do no injustice to the sinner that should be so punished. As God would not be unjust if he should punish all mankind for ever, he is not unjust in punishing a part of the human race. And as he is not unjust in inflicting punishment on the reprobate, he is not unjust in decreeing that they shall be punished. For it is no worse for God to decree what he does, than it is for him to do what he decrees. And if God be not unjust in punishing sinners, he is not unjust in fitting the vessels of wrath for destruction.

V. According to these sentiments it may be said that God is partial. Though it be admitted that he is not unjust in the damnation of the reprobate, as all mankind deserve the damnation of hell, yet as all are equally unworthy and guilty, if God were impartial he would treat all human beings in the same manner. But if he exalt some persons to heaven, and abase others to hell, he is very partial and is a respecter of persons. And partiality in any being is very hateful and criminal. Can we then believe that God is such a being? To Cornelius and his friends, Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." And Paul says to the saints at Rome, "There is no respect of persons with God."

In reply to this objection it may be asked,

What enabled Peter to perceive of a truth that God is no respecter of persons? It was because God heard the prayers, and accepted the alms of the devout Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, as readily as if he had been a Jew. Peter therefore said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In this holy and impartial manner, God has always conducted towards human creatures. He said even to Cain, "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." God has always approved and accepted of such persons as have done well, and he has always disapproved and rejected such persons as have done evil, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, young or old, high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, elected or reprobated. He then is no respecter of persons, but he treats every person according to his real character and conduct. The apostle writes to the saints at Rome, "God will render to every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. But unto them who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory, honor and peace to every

man that worketh good ; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile : for there is no respect of persons with God." From these words you may easily see what is meant when it is said, God is no respecter of persons. It is meant that he does not, through partiality or a respect of persons, approve or reward any persons who do wrong, nor condemn nor punish any persons who do right. But you will say he renews and sanctifies and glorifies one person, while another person who is no more sinful and guilty, he blinds and hardens and destroys. He makes one person holy and beautiful, blessed and glorious, while he makes another person unholy and hateful, accursed and debased. It is even so. Do you then conclude that God is partial? You may as well conclude that he is partial because he makes among his creatures the least difference. But do you suppose that God is partial because he has made you a man and not a worm ? or because he has created you a man and not an angel ? Is he partial because he has created the angels holy, and not unholy creatures ? or is he partial because he has caused you to be an unholy, and not a holy being ? Would he be partial if he should now renew your heart and cause you to be holy ; although he should not renew and sanctify another person, who is not more sinful and guilty than yourself ? Do you reply, If God does not make such differences among his creatures from partiality, why does he cause such differences to exist ? No doubt for the wisest

and best of reasons. For God is wise and good as well as sovereign and powerful. And he has plainly taught us why he effects and decrees the destruction of the reprobate, and the salvation of the elect. By saving the elect, and by destroying the reprobate, God makes the greatest difference which can exist between rational creatures. But this difference is not made because one is a Jew, and another a Gentile, because one is an European, and another an African, nor because one has sinned more or less than another, nor because one is rich, and another poor, nor because one is learned, and another ignorant, nor because God has a partial fondness for one person, and no proper regard for another, nor because God is arbitrary and tyrannical in his decrees, or in his conduct. For God is holy, just and good, and so are all his decrees, and so is all his conduct. He decrees and effects the salvation of the elect, and the destruction of the reprobate, because he is impartial, and no respecter of persons; because he is good, and doeth good, and his tender mercies are over all his works; because he regards the glory of his own holy and blessed name, and the highest holiness and happiness of created beings. Sinners do not oppose the doctrine of the divine decrees, because they represent God as a partial being, but because his decrees are impartial. If God would shew a partial regard to the selfish feelings, and the selfish interests of the wicked, they would be well pleased. But because he is strictly im-

partial, and regards the dearest and best interests of the universe, and has no partial regard to any selfish interest, selfish and partial sinners are displeased, and accuse God of possessing such a sinful and hateful character as they themselves possess. Thus, in accusing God, they condemn themselves. How true are the words of Solomon, "The lips of a fool will swallow up himself!"

VI. The objector may now say, if God be not partial, yet according to these sentiments he is certainly destitute of benevolence. He is a most malicious and hateful being. What man would treat his children, or the worst creature, as God treats mankind, if these sentiments be true? How can a person, who has the least degree of reason or common sense, ever believe such doctrines? If I thought they were true, I should be distracted. I will not allow myself to think of such shocking sentiments. If these doctrines are true, how do I know but that God has decreed to damn my soul in hell? How can I ever love a being, who hates me, and who will punish me with the devils and damned spirits for ever? Such a being is most hateful. And can I think that God is such a being? If he is, he does not possess the least goodness.

It may be replied,

Consider, my dear fellow creature, your own character. The whole difficulty may exist in

your own heart. Are you not by nature like the rest of your fellow creatures? Does not the whole world lie in wickedness? Were we not born sinners? Are we not wise to do evil, while to do good we have no knowledge? Are not our hearts full of evil, and are they not fully set in us to do evil? Do we not roll sin as a sweet morsel under our tongues? Do we not drink iniquity like water? Do we not say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? Who is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" Do we not possess the carnal mind, which is enmity against God? for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. May not what the Lord Jesus Christ said to sinners, be truly said to us? "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Have we not both seen and hated both Jesus Christ and the Father? Have we not hated him without a cause? Do we not call evil good and good evil? Do we not put darkness for light and light for darkness? Do we not call bitter sweet and sweet bitter? Do we not hate the living and true God, his law, his decrees and his holy conduct? Are not the doctrines, which we hate and reject in the pride and folly, the vanity and

wickedness of our hearts, the true doctrines of the gospel? Let us be humble. Let us be enquiring and teachable. Let us pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit. Let us read the holy bible with deep concern and reverence. Let us take heed unto ourselves, lest under some odious name we reject the pure and precious doctrines of the gospel. There is one "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." Our hearts are by nature deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We may deceive and destroy ourselves. We may deceive and destroy our fellow creatures. But woe be unto us! if we listen to the destroyer. Woe be unto us! if we reject the living and true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Woe be unto us! if we hate the decrees of God; if we condemn his holy law; if we despise the gospel of his grace; if we accuse his conduct in having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardening whom he will! Woe, woe, woe be unto us! if we destroy the souls of our fellow creatures by spreading the poison of error and opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus. Consider then, my dear fellow creature, by the sorrows of hell and the joys

of heaven, you are intreated to consider your own character and conduct. Have you been born of the Spirit? Have you been called from darkness into marvellous light? Have you been quickened and made alive unto God through Jesus Christ? Does the spirit of love, of truth, of grace, of peace and joy dwell and reign in your heart? While you profess your hatred of the plain and solemn doctrines of the gospel; while you hate the holy, sovereign and glorious Creator, Preserver and Governor of the universe; while you hate his decrees; while you hate his conduct; O what is the sin and the folly, the madness and the depravity of your heart! But you may yet escape the damnation of hell.—Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, and give glory to his name. Repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. But, if you will not hear and love and obey the truth, consider that, "he that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

VII. It is sometimes objected that if these doctrines be true, the elect will be saved whatever they may do. If we are elected we shall certainly be saved. And we may as well never read as read the holy scriptures. We may as well never attend as attend the ministry of the gospel. We may as well be careless and indulge ourselves in errors and wickedness, as be anxious for our souls, search for the truth and

avoid sin. If we are elected, it is no matter what we do for we shall certainly be saved.

To this objection it may be replied,

Solomon says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." It is believed the objector will have no reason to complain, if he be answered according to this direction of Solomon. You may then be told with as much truth and reason as there is in the objection, that if it is decreed you shall finish the reading of this book you will certainly do it, though you now close the book and never read another word in it. When you propose to visit your friends, if it is decreed that you shall make the visit, you will certainly do it, though you never go from home. If you have any work to do and it is decreed that you shall do it, you will certainly do it, though you take no thought about it. But if it be decreed that you shall not do it, the work will not be done though you should do it. If it be decreed how long you shall live, you can live no longer, and die no sooner, than the appointed time, whatever you may do. If then you put an end to your life to-day, you will live the time appointed, though it was decreed that you should live many years from the present time. If God has decreed all things, every thing will be as he has decreed, and it is no matter what we do. We may as well take no care of ourselves, or put an end to our lives, as labor for their support. Since God has foreordained whatsoever

comes to pass, all things will come to pass as he has foreordained, though nothing ever takes place.

But Solomon also says, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be found like unto him." Agreeably to this direction it may be replied, The objection resembles the mis-representations of Satan. He said unto the Lord Jesus Christ, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone." Satan here quoted a sentence from the ninety-first psalm. But of the sentence he professed to quote, he omitted these important words, "To keep thee in all thy ways." These words were omitted, because they show the folly and the falsehood of his temptation. If Christ had cast himself from the temple he would have gone from his ways and would have sinned and been destroyed. It was written, he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." It was not written that the angels were charged to keep Christ, if he did not keep the way of duty. In his subtle temptation Satan declared only a part of the truth and he declared it in such a manner that what he said was false. In the objection only a part of the doctrine of election is stated. Let this doctrine be truly and fairly stated and this mighty objection vanishes. For according to this doctrine God has decreed

that the elect shall repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and become perfectly holy through the ministry of the gospel. Where then is the foundation of this objection to the doctrine of election? Who can, with the least truth or reason, oppose this doctrine: For whom God foreknew *he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* They who were chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, *were chosen that they should be holy and without blame before him in love.* The elect then will read the holy scriptures. They will attend the ministry of the gospel. They will be anxious for their salvation. They will search for the truth. They will hate and avoid every sin. They will be holy and beautiful, they will be blessed and glorious for ever; "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

VIII. It is sometimes objected that if these sentiments be true, then whatever the non-elect may do, they will certainly be lost. Though they should do ever so well, yet God has decreed that they shall be destroyed. There are then no motives for doing our duty. But in his word, God calls to every person to repent and believe the gospel. And he offers and promises salvation to every penitent and believing sinner. But if God has decreed that a part of mankind shall be damned, if we are of this

number we shall be damned, whatever we may do.

To the objector it may be answered,

If you are of the number, which God has decreed to destroy, what is it certain, that you will do? Is it certain that you will do your duty? Is it certain that you will repent of your sins, believe the gospel and become holy? Is it certain that you will ever do right in one instance? Is it certain that you will ever perform one holy action, or have one holy desire? If you are one of the reprobate, is it not certain that you will never perform one holy action, and never have one holy desire? Though God commands and intreats you to repent and believe the gospel, though he offers to forgive all your sins, and to grant you his favor through life, his presence in death, and the exceeding and eternal weight of heavenly glory, if you will only cease to do evil, and learn to do well; yet if you are not one of the elect, you will refuse to hear and to obey the kind and gracious voice of your God and Saviour. Though God every moment threatens his wrath against you, though he denounces a curse upon your person, your property, and all your enjoyments, though you will be accursed in death, and condemned at the judgment of the great day, though you shall be tormented in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever, except you repent and believe the gospel; yet, if you are one of the reprobate, you will certainly persist in sin all your life; you will die

in your sins, and you will blaspheme the great and the holy name of Jehovah for ever and ever! If you are one of the reprobate, you will despise the riches of the divine goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. If you are one of the reprobate, after your hardness and impenitent heart, you will treasure unto yourself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish unto every soul of man that doeth evil. If God has decreed that you shall be damned, *he has also decreed that you shall be fitted for damnation.* And he will blind your eyes, he will harden your heart, and he will deaden your soul. He will form you into a vessel of wrath, and fit you for that perdition by which he intends to show his wrath, and make his power known. If you are one of the reprobate, you will be for ever unholy and hateful, accursed and tormented. Nor will one of your fellow creatures be able to say a word in your favor, or a word against God; when he shall destroy your soul. In the jndgment of the great day, your own mouth shall be shut. You will then be obliged to justify God in decreeing and effecting your destruction. You will then be obliged to condemn yourself for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, and for destroying your own soul. If you are one of the reprobate, you may learn what awaits you by reading the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, and Ju-

das. If you are one of the reprobate, you know the sentence, which you shall hear against yourself from the mouth of your judge, in the great day of judgment. For the Lord Jesus Christ will then say unto all the reprobate, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

IX. By some persons it is objected, that these sentiments are unfavorable to piety and morality. It is said they disturb the peace of families and societies. They make divisions in churches, and among the professors of religion. They perplex the minds of enquiring and convinced sinners. They disturb young converts, and sometimes damp the zeal and fervor of a religious revival. These doctrines, therefore, are of an unhappy tendency, and lead to impiety and immorality.

In reply to this objection it may be asked,

Who are the most violent opposers of these sentiments? Are they the most moral and pious persons? And are they, who most fully and firmly believe these sentiments, the most immoral and impious? Are the ministers who believe and preach these sentiments, usually worldly in their spirit, and immoral in their conduct, and destitute of evangelical piety? Are not the careless and profane, the worldly and prayerless, the self-righteous and the self-deceived, the formalist and the hypocrite, the heretic and the infidel, the most fixed and vio-

lent enemies of these sentiments? If these doctrines disturb the peace of families and societies, do they not produce the very effects, which were produced by the doctrines of Christ and the apostles, and the most thorough, faithful and devout ministers and Christians in every age of the church? If these doctrines cause divisions in churches and among the professors of religion, why do you charge these divisions upon the friends, rather than upon the enemies of these doctrines? If all the churches, and all the professors of Christianity, and all the professed ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, loved God and his law, and his decrees, and his conduct; would they be divided by these sentiments, which give the fullest and brightest view of the divine glory? Are not these doctrines chiefly opposed by worldly and carnal churches, by false and unholy professors, by wicked and unfaithful ministers? It is agreed that these doctrines perplex the minds of awakened and convinced sinners. Such sinners are always perplexed with truth and duty, until their hearts are humbled, and they become obedient and submissive unto God, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardeneth whom he will harden. "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble. They grope at noon day as in the night, and they grope as if they had no eyes." But it is objected that these sentiments disturb young converts. Young converts desire, and they greatly need instruction.

When these doctrines are plainly and fully taught, they delight and nourish the hearts of young converts. Young converts and other Christians always feel uneasy and restless until their minds are informed and established in the great and blessed doctrines of the gospel. If respecting these doctrines, the minds of young converts are troubled, they are troubled by those false teachers and false professors, who practise "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive." Such persons misrepresent the true doctrines of the gospel, and wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, and to the grief of pious souls, who are so unhappy as to be ensnared by their subtlety, and affected by their poisonous and pernicious influence.

If these doctrines damp the zeal and fervor of religious revivals, it is of such revivals as resemble the flames of hell, where there is much heat, but no light. If these doctrines are abused and perverted, if they are opposed and misrepresented, the unhappy effects are not to be charged against the doctrines, nor against the Holy Spirit who reveals these doctrines in the blessed bible, but they are to be charged to the ignorance and the errors, the folly and the wickedness of their enemies and opposers. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine

unto them." Why do they, who are thus blinded by Satan, and led captive by him at his will, pretend that the great doctrines of the gospel are unfavorable to piety and morality? What is our professed love to God, our devotion and our piety, while we are ignorant of his perfections, of his designs, his decrees, his law, his gospel and his conduct? Without the true knowledge of God, true piety never exists. While ignorant of God, what is our professed repentance towards God? While ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ, what is our professed faith in his name? Without repentance and faith, what is our morality, our benevolence, and our compassion towards our fellow creatures? To many persons, who think highly of their piety and morality, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ may be truly applied: "Woe unto you, scribes, pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." But they, who are taught, and who receive the pure doctrines of the gospel, are humbled into an holy obedience and submission to the Lord their God and Saviour.—While they behold the glory of the divine perfections, decrees and conduct, in the face of Jesus Christ, their love is pure and fervent; their repentance thorough and permanent; and their faith lively and powerful. By the great

doctrines of the gospel, their minds are fixed on God in Christ Jesus, and all the graces of the Spirit are excited and strengthened in their hearts. And these divine graces shine in every expression of love to God, and love to man; in all the deeds of piety and morality. The elect are able truly to say, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." AMEN.

SERMON X.

JOHN VI. 37.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

It is now proposed to mention some reflections, which arise from what has been said in the preceding discourses.

REFLECTIONS.

I. The doctrine of election is an essential doctrine of the gospel.

It is closely connected with the fundamental articles of natural and revealed religion. It results from the perfections of God, and it gives the fullest and clearest view of the divine glory. To the eternal purpose of God to redeem his chosen people must be traced the gift of the Saviour, and the atonement which he has made for sin by his death on the cross. When the Saviour is given, and the atonement made, and the gospel published, and salvation freely offered to sinners, the doctrine of election lays the only foundation of hope for the salvation of immortal souls. They therefore who understand the bible, clearly perceive that this doctrine is one of the principal and distinguishing articles of the Christian faith. Accor-

dingly the Protestant churches have inserted this doctrine in their public creeds. The reformed churches in Europe, and the regular churches in America, plainly and fully profess in their standards of faith to believe the doctrine of election. Though it has been constantly opposed by every generation of sinners, it is at this day most firmly believed and most plainly taught by the faithful in Christ Jesus. Even they, who deny this doctrine, sometimes perceive that they cannot be consistent with themselves unless they deny the whole system of divine truth. Hence it is often said that the preaching of this doctrine always makes Deists. This doctrine, when it is plainly preached, is seen to be connected with every Christian doctrine. They, therefore, who deny this doctrine, if they would be consistent, are obliged to deny all the essential doctrines of Christianity, and to become disbelievers of divine revelation. It is not however true that the preaching of this doctrine *makes* deists. We are by nature infidels. And many, who ignorantly imagine they believe the bible, while in their natural state, yet deny its doctrines when they are truly and plainly preached and prove themselves to be infidels in their hearts. To preach this doctrine gives the hearers an opportunity to shew what they do believe. And it proves that many persons who profess to believe the bible do not believe the system of divine truths which it contains, and of which the doctrine of election is a fundamental and essential article.

II. The doctrine of election is a very plain doctrine. It is fully revealed and plainly taught in the holy scriptures. It accords with the perfections of God, with the character and conditions of human beings, and with all the doctrines and duties of Christianity. This doctrine is as plain as the other doctrines of the bible. The reasons of the doctrine are very evident and very important. The same reasons which induced God to create angels and men and to give his Son to die on the cross, and to send the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the hearts of sinners, induced him to decree that a certain part of mankind should be saved. What persons God has decreed to save is not revealed. No one can know that he is elected, until he repents of his sins, believs on the Lord Jesus Christ, and professes the character which God has decreed to give to the elect. Nor can any person know that he is not elected, while he continues in this life, unless he knows that he has committed the unpardonable transgression. But that God has decreed that a certain part of mankind shall be saved is as plainly taught and as easily understood as any doctrine in the bible. It is therefore a very plain doctrine. It is so plainly taught and so easily understood that even sinners, who choose darkness rather than light, usually perceive how it affects their interests. If they did not understand this doctrine, they would not oppose it; nor would they be disturbed when it is preached.

III. The doctrine of election affords good reasons for using the means of salvation. If God had not decreed that a part of mankind shall be saved, there would be no reason to expect the least benefit from preaching or hearing the gospel. But since God has decreed to save a vast multitude of the human race, through the ministry of the gospel, it is certain that the preaching and hearing of the gospel will be productive of eternal and infinite benefits. It is easy to perceive the connection between the means and the end which is to be effected by the appointed means. And it is easy to perceive the propriety and necessity of using the appointed means to gain the proposed end. If God intends that men shall be rich through industry, and healthy through temperance, then there is a good reason for being industrious and temperate. If God decreed to save Noah by means of the ark, then there was a good reason for building the ark. If God decreed to effect the independence of the United States, by the patriotism of Washington, and the bravery of the American army, then Washington and the army were necessary and important. And if God means to save his people by the ministry of the gospel, then it is necessary and important to preach and to hear the word of God. Accordingly they, who have most clearly understood and most firmly believed the doctrine of election, have been the most faithful and diligent in using with their fellow creatures the appointed means of

salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ believed and taught the doctrine of election; and what has he not done and suffered for the salvation of his chosen people? The apostles believed and taught the doctrine of election; and what men were more diligent and laborious in preaching the gospel to sinners? Those ministers and Christians, who have been the most zealous and engaged since the days of the apostles, for the salvation of their fellow men, have believed the doctrine of election. This doctrine is believed at the present day by those persons who are the most fervent in their prayers, and the most zealous in their exertions for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. This doctrine is believed by the missionary societies in America, and in Europe, and taught by their missionaries. And those Christians and those ministers, who most firmly believe the doctrine of election, do most faithfully use the means of salvation, and most highly prize the institutions of Christianity. And the reason is easily perceived. This doctrine lays the only foundation to hope for success in making exertions for the salvation of sinners.

IV. There is no good reason why the doctrine of election should not be preached. By the prophet God says, "He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully." The apostle said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." To the churches of

Galatia, he says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Now how can a minister faithfully preach the word of God, unless he fully and clearly preach the doctrine of election? Is not the divine purpose to save a certain part of mankind an important and essential part of the counsel of God, and most nearly connected with the whole system of the divine purposes and operations? How can a minister preach the gospel, which Paul preached, without fully explaining and earnestly enforcing the doctrine of the divine decrees respecting the eternal characters and condition of human beings? Why then should not every minister preach, in the fullest and plainest manner, the doctrine of election in its intimate connection with the doctrine of reprobation? Yet those ministers, who truly and plainly preach these doctrines, are often blamed and censured by other ministers and by many professors of Christianity. But do such ministers and such professors know what they are doing, when they blame and censure those who preach the doctrine of divine decrees in its proper extent and connection? Do they know that they are virtually blaming and censuring God for requiring his ministers to preach his word with fidelity? If the doctrine of election is not to be preached, what is to be preached? It may be answered, Faith and repentance. But how can men believe, unless they are taught what to believe? And is not the doctrine of election to be believed? How can

men repent unless they are taught of what sins they ought to repent? And what is better suited to convince men of their sins and to exhibit the nature and necessity of repentance, than the preaching of the doctrine of election? This doctrine shows sinners the character, and the designs, and the conduct of God. This doctrine gives sinners an opportunity to see and to feel that they hate God, and his decrees, and his conduct. But if sinners are never taught the divine perfections and the divine determinations and operations they will not know what they ought to believe, nor will they know the nature and necessity of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is said, these doctrines displease the hearers. And who is to be blamed, when hearers are displeased with the decrees of God? Is God to be blamed, or his ministers, or they who hate the divine name and the divine decrees? The Lord Jesus Christ preached the truths, which are implied in the doctrine of election, at Nazareth, although all they who were in the synagogue, when they heard his words, were filled with wrath. Was Christ to be blamed, or his hearers? But it is said these doctrines are very discouraging. But whom do these doctrines discourage except the enemies of God? and ought they not to be discouraged? Their wishes and designs can never prosper. They can never dethrone God. Nor can they hinder him from working all things after the counsel of his own will. Is it not best then

that they should wholly despair of effecting their designs and become reconciled to God? And is it not best that the doctrine of election, which is very distressing and very discouraging to the enemies of God, should for this very reason be preached in the fullest and plainest manner? Ought it not also to be preached in the same manner for the purpose of rejoicing and encouraging the friends of God? They, then, who desire the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the edification and sanctification of saints, will desire that the doctrine of election be fully and plainly preached.

V. They who oppose the doctrine of election oppose the very existence of the church. Whatever has been done for the salvation of sinners is the consequence of the divine purpose to save a certain part of mankind. The apostle says to the saints at Ephesus, "To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." To this eternal purpose is to be traced the existence of the church, and the conversion and salvation of every person who is saved. They who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, are blessed according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after

the counsel of his own will. Never would the church have existed, nor one soul been redeemed, unless in the counsels of eternity God had been pleased to decree that a certain number of sinners should be saved. They therefore who oppose the eternal purpose of God respecting the redemption of his people, are equally opposed to the very existence of the church. Under a profession of Christianity and a fair appearance of piety, they may conceal their characters from the eyes of their fellow creatures, and in many instances they may really suppose that they are the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his blessed kingdom. But every person, who hates the decrees of God, does also hate the divine character, and the divine conduct, as they are manifested in the redemption of his people through Jesus Christ.

VI. There is no more reason for opposing the doctrine of election than there will be for opposing the salvation of the righteous at the final judgment. When God decreed who should be saved and who should be destroyed, he knew and desired and decreed what was wisest and best. There can be no more reasons to induce God to save the righteous at the day of judgment, than there were to induce him in eternity to decree that they should be saved. Nor can there be any more reasons to induce God to destroy the wicked at the day of judgment than there were in eternity to induce

him to decree that the wicked should be destroyed. There can be no more foundation for objecting against the divine decrees, than there is for objecting against the divine conduct, and the divine character. If God is not to be blamed for his character, and for his conduct, he is not to be blamed for decreeing that only a certain number of the human race shall be saved. If no one can blame God in the day of judgment for saving the elect, no one can blame God for decreeing their salvation. They who are now displeased, because God has decreed to save a certain part of mankind, and to destroy the others, unless they become new creatures, will be displeased at the day of judgment, when God will save the elect, and destroy the reprobate. For when the Lord Jesus Christ shall say unto the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world," there will be as good reasons for opposing their salvation as can be given for opposing the doctrine of election.

VII. No benevolent person will ever oppose the doctrine of election. Every such person desires what is wisest and best. And every holy creature easily perceives that God is disposed and determined to produce the greatest good that can exist. The doctrine of election assures us that God has decreed to do what is best, respecting the number and the persons that shall be saved. He has also decreed to do

what is best respecting the number and the persons that shall be lost. How then can any benevolent person feel the least objection against the doctrine of election? No such person can desire that God, in one instance, should alter his purpose respecting the salvation and destruction of immortal souls. The Lord Jesus Christ knew that all whom the Father had given him, in the covenant of redemption, would come to him and be saved. He knew that all the rest of mankind would refuse to come to him for life, and be destroyed. Nor did he feel any desire that God should alter his purposes. For of Christ it is written, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." And if the Lord Jesus Christ be satisfied, what benevolent being can be dissatisfied? Though he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he rejoiced in view of the divine sovereignty and efficiency in saving and destroying immortal souls. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Every one, who has the benevolent spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, will rejoice that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardeneth whom he will. For so it seems good in his sight. And whatever seems good in the sight of God is wisest and best. No one, who is truly benevolent, can ever make the least

objection, or feel the least opposition against the doctrine of election.

VIII. The opposition which exists against the doctrine of election, arises wholly from selfishness. This doctrine is not opposed because it is false. They who oppose the doctrine delight in error and deceit. If the doctrine of election were false, it would be pleasing to the hearts of such persons. Nor is this doctrine opposed because there is not sufficient and abundant evidence that it is true. For it is as evident as any doctrine of Christianity. It is as evident as the perfections and existence of the living and true God. The ignorance which exists in the minds of many persons respecting this doctrine, arises from their enmity against it. But their enmity against this doctrine does not arise from their ignorance. For how can a person hate an object, of which he has no knowledge? Nor is this doctrine hated because it affords any encouragement or inducement to commit iniquity. For truth is always pointed, as a sharp two-edged sword, against sin. And no truth is more pointed against the enemies of God, or more painful to unholy minds than the doctrine of election. No person can understand this doctrine, and realize how it affects his character and interest, and yet be an enemy to God, without the keenest anguish. It is because this doctrine cuts the sinner's heart, and gives him no peace until he is reconciled to God, that it is hated by

the wicked. It is because it shows that God and his designs, his law and his decrees, his gospel and his whole conduct, are arrayed against sinners, that they hate the doctrine of election. It is because the sinner sees that every thing in the universe is armed against his present peace, and his eternal felicity, if he continues to oppose the decrees of God, that he arouses all his strength, and summons all his wrath against the doctrines of election and reprobation. Sinners hate these doctrines because they show the folly, the weakness, the madness, and the misery of the enemies of God. From the selfish feelings of the wicked, arise all the enmity, and all the opposition that ever existed on earth, or in hell, against the decrees of God respecting the salvation and damnation of immortal souls. The divine decrees give a death blow to the selfish hopes, the selfish wishes, the selfish prospects, and the selfish interests of sinners. God says to every rational creature, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But every sinner possesses the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The sinner hates God and the law from his total selfishness. From his total selfishness, he hates the gospel of Jesus Christ. From his total selfishness, he hates the whole conduct of God. And from his total selfishness, he hates the divine decrees. Sinners

cannot bear that God should, for the glory of his holy name, which they supremely hate, sacrifice their selfish interest, which they supremely love. As the doctrines of election and reprobation exhibit the character of God in the fullest and clearest manner, they are hated with the greatest enmity and violence by every selfish creature. From the total selfishness of totally depraved creatures, arises all the opposition that exists against these plain, pleasant, important and fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

IX. The non-elect ought to love the doctrine of election. Every moral agent is bound to love what is true and what is good. As God is light and love, every rational creature ought to see his glory, and to love his name. In the creation of rational beings God has been moved by the purest and best motives. In all his conduct, and in all his decrees respecting his rational creatures, he has done, and has designed to do what is wisest and best. And now has any rational creature in the universe the least reason to blame God? Has God ever said, or done, or decreed what was not wisest and best?—Though he has created all things for his own glory, yet has he not done right? Though he has caused great differences in the natural capacities of his creatures, has he not done right? Though he has caused great differences in the moral characters of his rational beings, and tho' these differences will continue and increase for

ever, yet has not God done right? Though God causes great, eternal and increasing differences between the conditions of sinful and guilty creatures, yet in what instance has he done, or has he designed the least injustice? Though God, in the counsels of eternity, decreed what he would do, and what should be the character and condition of every rational creature, yet were his decrees unjust, unholy, or unwise? The decrees of God are as holy and just, as wise and good as his conduct. And all his conduct is the exercise and expression of his infinite holiness, justice, wisdom and goodness. God approves of his own purposes and conduct because they are wisest and best. And for the same reason he requires every rational creature to approve of his conduct and of his decrees. What creature has any right to hate or to blame God, for any of his decrees, or any of his actions? Has Satan any right to blame God for his decrees and his conduct respecting himself? Has Cain a right to blame God for his decrees and his conduct respecting himself? Has Pharaoh a right to blame God for his decrees and his conduct respecting himself? Has Judas a right to blame God for his decrees and his conduct respecting himself? Has any reprobate the least reason, or the least right to blame God for decreeing and effecting his damnation? When the Lord Jesus Christ shall say unto the reprobate at the judgment of the great day, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," who will

have any right, or any reason to desire that they should not go away into everlasting punishment? The reprobate will then be silenced. They will know that for the decrees and the conduct of God respecting themselves, they ought to love and praise his holy name for ever and ever.

X. The elect have good reasons to praise God for destroying the reprobate. For decreeing and effecting the damnation of the reprobate, the righteous will for ever praise the name of God. Yet their praises will not arise from ignorance, or malevolence, but from knowledge and love. For the judgments of God upon the wicked in this life, the righteous have often blessed and praised the Lord their God. At the Red sea the children of Israel praised God, not only for their salvation, but also for the destruction of Pharaoh and his host. In the hundred and thirth-sixth Psalm, the Psalmist says, "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." As evidences of the everlasting goodness and mercy of God, he mentions the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, and the destruction of other great and famous kings. The inhabitants of heaven are represented as saying, "Alleluia! salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore that did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her

hands. And again they said Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." The destruction of Pharaoh and of Antichrist, were types of the destruction of the reprobate at the day of judgment. As there are good reasons to praise God for destroying Pharaoh and Antichrist, so there will for ever be good reasons why the elect should praise God for the endless damnation of the reprobate. There will be as good reasons to praise God for destroying the reprobate, as there were to induce God to decree and effect their destruction. The reasons of the divine decrees, and of the divine conduct respecting the reprobate, will be for ever appearing more evident and glorious to the elect. As they shall more fully and clearly behold the divine perfections displayed on the vessels of wrath, the louder and sweeter will be their songs of praise. They will for ever perceive and realize that God ought to be praised for decreeing to show his wrath, and make his power known upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as well as for decreeing to make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory.

XI. The doctrine of election affords Christiains a permanent foundation for comfort and delight. In view of this doctrine they may be comforted and delighted respecting their own salvation. For though they have hated God and the law, Jesus Christ and the gospel, tho' they have grieved the Holy Spirit and deserve

the damnation of hell ; yet God will glorify his great name in their forgiveness and salvation. By their salvation he will also promote the knowledge, the holiness and the happiness of all holy creatures. Although Christians, in the present state of sin and sorrow, differ in some respects, and are at variance among themselves ; yet in heaven they will be perfectly of one heart and of one mind. Their love will be pure and fervent. Their joy will be complete and eternal. " God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away." They will be assured that their God and Saviour has raised to their holy and happy society, the very number and the very persons, whom it was best to redeem from sin and sorrow. With the purest and sweetest joy they will for ever unite in singing, " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father : to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

XII. The doctrine of election lays a foundation to hope for the conversion and salvation of sinners. Though they hate God and his holy law with all their hearts, though they hate the Lord Jesus Christ and his blessed gospel without a cause, though they resist the Holy Spirit, and abuse all the means which are used for their conversion and salvation ; yet God is able

to open their eyes, to unstop their ears, to enlighten their consciences and to destroy the enmity and the unbelief of their hearts. He can quicken sinners, *who are dead in trespasses and sins.* He can renew and sanctify and glorify the very number and the very persons, whom he has given unto the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the number and these are the persons, whom it is wisest and best to save from hell and raise to heaven. If we reject the doctrine of election, we leave no foundation to hope for the salvation of the least sinner. But this doctrine lays a foundation to hope for the salvation of the greatest sinners, who are yet prisoners of hope in this state of probation. When we behold the errors and the sins of many persons, who profess to be the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ; when we behold the great number of formalists and hypocrites, who are found in the churches; when we behold the folly and the vanity of children and youth; when we behold the violent enmity of the more aged and hardened sinners against Jesus Christ and the gospel of his grace; when we behold the prevalent and damnable delusions of the great destroyer; yet we need not despair respecting the salvation of sinners. For the Lord Jesus Christ hath said, "*All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*" AMEN AND AMEN.